

**Teachers' Perceptions of Personal Program Plan Requirements and School Team  
Collaboration**

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Master of Education  
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By  
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## **Abstract**

The purpose of the study was to explore the overall perceptions that resource room teachers had of the required SMART goals, rubric outcome sampling, and the collaborative effort of Personal Program Planning team. This study included a descriptive, embedded single-case study having three sub-units. Each subunit consisted of one resource room teacher who was teaching in a central Saskatchewan urban school division at the elementary level. Each resource room teacher was asked to select one student with a cognitive, behavioural, or multiple disability and a previous PPP document written for him or her (i.e., this is not the student's first year of meeting the criteria for Intensive Supports) by that particular resource room teacher. Each resource room teacher participated in three separate focus open-ended interviews designed to explore their perceptions of SMART goals, rubric outcome sampling, and the collaborative nature of the PPP process.

Pattern-matching and exploration building were the two analytic techniques used in this study. Numerous themes were identified in the data. The themes present in data collected from at least two of the participants included: the need to be flexible with parents; resource room teachers have large workloads; concern over EAs not being able to attend PPP meetings; the need for rubrics to be discussed within the context of a PPP meeting; the effect of having different knowledge bases and levels of expertise represented in a PPP team; the use of visual aides during the PPP meeting; and working with the dual role of resource room teacher and vice principal.

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## Dedications

*This thesis is dedicated to the old girl who knits my toques  
and the old man who calls me “Punkin”.*

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## Chapter One: Introduction

Regular education or alternative education courses provide appropriate programming for the majority of Saskatchewan students. However, for those students whose needs cannot be met by those programs, the Personal Program Plan "...provides the basis for planning, instruction, assessment, evaluation, and reporting to parents" (Saskatchewan Learning, 2006b, p. 10). A PPP is a "...a written record of collaborative planning with measurable, achievable and relevant time-related annual outcomes with related learning objectives" (Saskatchewan Learning, 2006b, p. 10). It is the responsibility of the PPP team to develop a PPP that is appropriate for each student who meets the criteria for intensive supports. Guidelines and requirements have been designed to ensure that each student attending a Saskatchewan school be provided with a quality education. One guideline appearing in Saskatchewan Ministry of Education published documents since 1991 was that the PPP process be a collaborative effort (Saskatchewan Learning, 2001). Through the years, collaboration has been considered *best practice* for teamwork efforts (Dettmer et al., 1993; Reinhiller, 1999; Saskatchewan Learning, 2006a; Twachtman-Cullen & Twachtman-Reilly, 2002). Collaboration was viewed as the merge of unique skills of willing participants in order to find a creative solution (Saskatchewan Learning, 2001). Teamwork was mentioned as a key component of the PPP process, collaboration, and any other quality process (Benjamin, 2007; Dettmer et al., 1993; Reinhiller, 1999; Saskatchewan Learning, 2006a; Twachtman-Cullen & Twachtman-Reilly, 2002). Collaboration would be a necessary component of the PPP process in order to ensure it resulted in a quality PPP (Benjamin 2007; Dettmer et al., 1993; Reinhiller, 1999; Saskatchewan Learning, 2006a; Twachtman-Cullen & Twachtman-Reilly, 2002).

Two requirements that the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education has published in documents, as early as 2006, are the inclusion of Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-related (SMART) goals and rubric outcome sampling to be included in the PPP

process. The term SMART is an acronym for a particular type of goal that stands for: **S**pecific; **M**easurable; **A**chievable; **R**elevant; and **T**ime-related (Saskatchewan Learning, 2006a). The term *specific* refers to the necessity of a goal being written in clear language (Saskatchewan Learning, 2006a). The term *measurable* addresses the need for the student's achievement to be described, assessed, and evaluated (Saskatchewan Learning, 2006a). The term *achievable* refers to the necessity of the goal to be realistic for the student (Saskatchewan Learning, 2006a). The term *relevant* addresses the need for the goal to be meaningful for the student and identified as a priority by the team (Saskatchewan Learning, 2006a). The term *time-related* refers to how the goal can be accomplished within a specific time period-typically one school year (Saskatchewan Learning, 2006a).

Rubric outcome sampling is a strategy for scaling individual students' achievements. The strategy's roots can be found in the Community Mental Health Center (CMHC) movement which occurred in the United States of America in the early 1960s (Brown, 1994). Goal Attainment Scaling (GAS) was developed during the CMHC movement to provide clinicians with the ability to monitor and record the unique challenges of individual patients, while simultaneously collecting data for comparing and generalizing results of treatments in studies (Brown, 1994). The benefits of using GAS were quickly realized in other forms of service delivery, including education (Smith, 1994). Over time, the strategy was tailored to suit the specific needs of special education. A result of this evolution was rubric outcome sampling. Rubric outcome sampling shared many characteristics with its predecessor, GAS. Both rubric strategies were scored using levels of attainment which have been assigned numeral values (Eaker et al., 2002; Smith, 1994). The GAS strategy used brief statements whereas rubric outcome sampling was to include complete sentences that followed a particular pattern (Eaker et

al., 2002; Saskatchewan Learning, 2006a; Smith, 1994). The recent inclusion of the previously mentioned requirements creates questions about whether these changes will have an effect on the collaborative effort of the PPP process.

The literature on PPPs, SMART goals, rubric outcome sampling, and collaboration is extensive, but no literature exists on how the inclusion of SMART goals and rubric outcome sampling has affected the collaborative efforts of the PPP team. The inclusion of SMART goals and rubric outcome sampling as PPP requirements occurred in 2006 (Saskatchewan Learning, 2006b). There has been no research to study the possible effect that the inclusion of SMART goals, and rubric outcome sampling in the *2008-2009 Funding Policy K-12 Operating Grant*, will have upon the collaborative efforts of the PPP team. The study of the effect of PPP requirements on the PPP team's collaborative efforts would help clarify the PPP process for Saskatchewan teachers. Potential benefits for students who's PPPs will be discussed include improvement of their resource room teachers' abilities to complete the PPP. The purpose of the study was to explore the overall perceptions that resource room teachers had of the required SMART goals, rubric outcome sampling, and the collaborative effort of Personal Program Planning team.

### ***Research Questions***

In order to explore resource room teachers' perspectives of the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education' requirements for the PPP, the following research questions will be investigated:

1. What is the resource room teachers' overall perception of the SMART goal and rubric outcome's ability to clarify the intent of a particular goal of the PPP for the PPP planning team members?

2. How do resource teachers view each team member's ability to participate in the development and evaluation of PPP's SMART goals and rubric outcomes?

## ***Definitions of Terms***

For the purposes of this study, the following definitions were used.

***Collaboration.*** A style for direct interaction between at least two co-equal parties voluntarily engaged in shared decision-making as they worked toward a common goal (Cook and Friend, 1991).

***Education Team.*** “An educational team exists when two or more teachers, family, or support personnel organize themselves to regularly plan, instruct and evaluate programs for a student or group of students over an extended period of time” (Saskatchewan Learning, 1999, p. 8).

***Goal.*** A goal of the PPP should direct efforts, in a way that is measurable, manageable, relevant and attainable for the student, to develop the potential of a student (Saskatchewan Learning, 2006a; 2001).

***Guidelines.*** Guidelines are “...factors that *should* be taken into account when developing, implementing, and evaluating...” (Saskatchewan Learning, 2006a, p. 6).

***Individualized Education Program (IEP).*** “A written plan of educational interventions designed for each student who receives special education” (Overton, 2009, p. 22). Please note that the terms IEP and Personal Program Plan (PPP) are interchangeable. The most commonly used term in Saskatchewan is PPP. The term PPP will be used in this proposal. A personal curriculum that included the desired outcomes, skills to be learned, how and where instruction would take place, ensure a holistic program, prioritize the goals that should be worked on immediately, and any needed plans for transition (Saskatchewan Learning, 1991).

***PPP Planning Meeting.*** The PPP planning meeting is an event which included the sharing of information and the development of a PPP (Saskatchewan Learning, 1991).

***Problem Solving.*** Problem solving as an activity in which two or more people were engaged in to identify the problem clearly and select possible solutions (Dettmer et al., 1993).

***Resource Room Teacher.*** A special education teacher who provides "...an educational program for students with mild disabilities who need assistance in basic skills such as reading, mathematics, and written language" (Burns, 2004, p. 284). The responsibilities of a resource room teacher can also include such tasks as collaboratively designing a PPP and coordinating transition planning. Please note that the terms resource room teacher and learning assistance teacher (LAT) are interchangeable. The term resource room teacher will be used in this thesis.

***Requirements.*** "Requirements *must* be followed to ensure funding for a program to continue" (Saskatchewan Learning, 2006a, p. 7).

***Rubric.*** "A scoring that lays out specific performance expectations. Rubrics divide an assignment into its component parts and provide a detailed description of what constitutes acceptable or unacceptable levels of performance for each of those parts" (Benjamin, 2007, p. xiv).

### ***Chapter Organization***

Chapter two provides a detailed review of the literature related to the evolution of the PPP process, a brief history of rubrics and collaboration, required resources of collaboration, and possible interfering themes. The qualitative nature of the study and the research methodology is provided in chapter three. Each resource room teacher took part in a series of three interviews and related PPP documents, as well accompanying rubrics were analyzed. Chapter four provides a description of each participant, their three separate interviews, and an analysis of the related PPP and rubric outcome sampling. Chapter five provides a summary of the study, its findings, and the advantages and limitations of the research design.

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to develop a deeper understanding of PPP guidelines and requirements in relation to the collaborative process. A discussion of the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education's evolving view on the PPP process is included as well as a review of the collaborative effort as it pertains to the school team effort. Due to the ambiguous nature of the term *collaboration* a discussion on the different perspectives of said topic has been included in this literature review. An exploration of collaboration in terms of definition, rationale, required resources, process evaluation, and interfering themes will assist with developing a deeper understanding on the process referred to as *collaboration*. The discussion concludes with the available suggestions posed by published authors on how the effectiveness of a collaborative process can be evaluated. The next section provides a description of the Response to Interventions that the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education has adopted to provide appropriate programming for every student attending Saskatchewan schools.

### ***Response to Interventions***

The Education Act, 1995 (Government of Saskatchewan, 2008) ensured that each person between the ages of six and 22 had the right to attend school and be provided with programs that are consistent with his or her abilities and learning needs. The Saskatchewan Ministry of Education (2008a; Caswell & Hadden, 2008) described a three-tiered system of Response to Interventions designed to meet the needs of all students attending Saskatchewan schools. Tier I, otherwise referred to as School-Wide Interventions (Base) or Universal Interventions, included division-wide and school-wide strategies, such as inclusive and differentiated instruction to meet the needs of individual students (Caswell & Hadden, 2008). It was predicted that the first tier of response to interventions would meet the needs of 80% to 82% of students attending

Saskatchewan schools (Caswell & Hadden, 2008). Tier II, otherwise referred to as Targeted/Group Interventions (Diversity) or Targeted Response to Intervention, included strategies such as parental engagement and appropriate programming with record of adaptations (Caswell & Hadden, 2008). It was predicted that 15% of students attending Saskatchewan schools would benefit from the second tier of response to interventions (Caswell & Hadden, 2008). Tier III, otherwise referred to as Intensive Individualized Intervention or Intensive Support, ensured that a PPP that was derived from assessment, took into account the core curriculum, as well as the Common Essential Learnings (CELs), and included any required supports to address the needs of an individual who met the requirements of Intensive Supports criteria (Caswell & Hadden, 2008; Saskatchewan Learning, 2001, 2004, 2006a, 2006b). The Saskatchewan Ministry of Education provides for two different levels of intensive supports: Level I and II. The Saskatchewan Ministry of Education (2008d) stated “The distinction between the levels relate to student needs and the amount of incremental costs incurred by the school division in the provision of intensive supports to a student” (§ 3). It was predicted that the third tier of response to interventions would be required to meet the needs of 3% to 5% of students attending Saskatchewan schools (Caswell & Hadden, 2008). Funding Support within the Ministry of requiring Intensive Support through a Provincial Impact Assessment Process (Caswell & Hadden, 2008; Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2008d). Those students would have learning needs that impacted on numerous areas of their performance and required intense and frequent supports as documented in their Personal Program Plan (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education 2008a, 2008b, 2008d). In order to design an effective Personal Program Plan (PPP) requirements and guidelines have been designed by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education.

The next section focuses on how the guidelines and requirements for the PPP, as designated by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, differ.

### ***Saskatchewan Learning Guidelines and Requirements for the Personal Program Plan***

Saskatchewan Learning (1991) stated the need for the development of a Personal Program Plan (PPP) to be a collaborative process as a guideline and provided a description of the stages of PPP development as a collaborative effort. Saskatchewan Learning (2001) stated that each student with an intellectual or multiple disability required a personal program that focused on the student's strengths and needs as well as taking the core curriculum and Common Essential Learnings (CELs) into consideration. The PPP was to be a concise plan of action for a single student that was planned, written, monitored, and evaluated in a collaborative fashion by individuals who were directly involved with the student (Saskatchewan Learning, 2001). Documents recently published by Saskatchewan Learning (2005) emphasized the need for collaboration by describing the PPP development as being a collaborative process that contains five phases: setting direction; gathering and sharing information; the PPP planning meeting; writing the PPP; and implementing and evaluating the PPP.

The first of the five phases of the PPP planning process was very reminiscent of Saskatchewan Learning's (1991, 2005) previous publications in the sense that collaboration was emphasized as follows: setting direction included the collaborative team was to be established and responsibilities were to be clarified before the PPP meeting had begun. The second phase's focus on collaboration was also reminiscent of Saskatchewan Learning's (1991, 2005) previous publications. The second phase of the PPP planning process heavily relied on the collaborative effort of the team to review records and reports, consult parents, the student, and previous

teachers, conduct further assessment as necessary, and share information with one another that would aid in the development of said document.

The third phase of PPP development, described as being the PPP planning meeting, of PPP development was very similar to the outline provided in 1991, but also included the concept of a facilitator (Saskatchewan Learning, 2006). The PPP planning meeting included the sharing of information, developing a personal curriculum that included the desired outcomes, skills to be learned, how and where instruction would take place, ensure a holistic program, prioritize the goals that should be worked on immediately, and any needed plans for transition. During the meeting it was essential that effective facilitation of the planning meeting occurs. It was not mandatory that the special education teacher facilitate the meeting. The facilitator must have had previous facilitating experience (Saskatchewan Learning, 2006b). Skills required to be a facilitator included: knowing what questions to ask at certain points; provide direction for conversation and discussion; and when to confirm the point being discussed (Saskatchewan Learning, 2006b). It was the responsibility of the facilitator to ensure that each area of development in the PPP was discussed during this meeting (Saskatchewan Learning, 2006b).

The largest shift in Saskatchewan Learning's philosophy of PPP development was evident in the fourth phase of PPP development. Although Saskatchewan Learning (1991) had mentioned the importance of the collaborative process and the inclusion of the stages of learning in PPP goals, it did not define the PPP as having those specific qualities, nor did it stress the presence of the areas of development as did later publications. This phase was described as writing the PPP and included essential components categorized by area of development and target skill, current level of performance (CLP), annual outcomes and short term objectives,

student outcome rubrics on sampling, and approval by parents after they have reviewed the document.

Saskatchewan Learning (2006b) concluded its discussion of the five phases of the PPP process by restating the importance of evaluating the PPP and expanded on its discussion by including the CLP and SMART outcomes/rubrics in this phase. The final phase was described as implementing and evaluating the PPP and included putting the plan into practice, reviewing and revising regularly, updating the CLP at year end, evaluating student progress based on SMART outcomes/rubrics (Saskatchewan Learning, 2006b).

There appeared to be a slight contradiction between what Saskatchewan Learning recommended in their guidelines for collaboration and what was required for the development of a PPP. The *2006-2007 Funding Policy K-12 Operating Grant* (Saskatchewan Learning, 2006b) was a document written and distributed by Saskatchewan Learning. In *Section E* of the 2006 funding policy Saskatchewan Learning (2006b) had included such topics as the purpose of funding and eligibility requirements for funding. Requirements were defined by Saskatchewan Learning (2006a) as criteria that must be met to ensure funding for a program to continue. The 2006 funding policy reinforced the requirement of rubric sampling to be included with the PPP that appeared in *Policy, Guideline, and Procedures for Functional Integrated Programs* (Saskatchewan Learning, 2006a, 2006b). However, in terms of Saskatchewan Learning's (2006b) opinion on the use of collaboration in the school setting, there appeared to be a contradiction between the two previously discussed documents and the 2006 funding policy. The document *Creating Opportunities for Students with Intellectual or Multiple Disabilities* recommended that PPP development be a collaborative effort and that at the very minimum the team should include the family, regular classroom teacher, a special education teacher, the

paraprofessional and the principal (Saskatchewan Learning, 2001). However, according to the 2006 funding policy, Saskatchewan Learning (2006b) only required the presence of one individual: a qualified special education teacher as opposed to the guidelines provided by Saskatchewan Learning (2006a) that stressed the importance of collaboration. The *2008-2009 Funding Policy K-12 Operating Grant* differed from previously published operating grants by listing a special education teacher and the child's regular classroom teacher as required personnel (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2008a). The 2006 funding policy and the 2008 funding policy differed in one other key aspect. Even though the 2008 funding policy did not mention collaboration as a requirement, it did include SMART goals as a requirement (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2008a).

Requirements and guidelines for special education activities and processes varied from province to province and from country to country. A general list of appropriate individuals that could be present at the development, revision, and review of the PPP: representative of the public agency (other than the child's teacher) who is qualified to provide, or supervise the provision of special education; the child's teacher, one or both of the child's parents and/or legal guardians; the child, where appropriate; other individuals at the discretion of the parent or agency; and a member of the evaluation team, if this is the first evaluation, or representative, or, the child's teacher who was knowledgeable about evaluation procedures who knew the child and who was familiar with the results of the evaluation (Arena, 2001). The individuals best suited to attend the meeting would be determined by the focus of the PPP meeting and needs of the individual student. It is the responsibility of those team members to design appropriate goals for a student's PPP. A discussion on effective annual outcomes and short term objectives follows this section.

*Effective Annual Outcomes and Short Term Objectives.* Arena (2001) compared the PPP to using a road map to take a trip as it has a starting place, a defined route and a destination; to define the route in which a student's learning is to take, Arena (2001) stated that a goal and its objectives are required. Arena (2001) explained that objectives must state: to what degree of success the skill will be performed; and by what date this will be achieved, and a learning channel, directly or indirectly. Goals were described by Arena (2001) as being planned for a full academic year leaving it possible for fewer goals than short term objectives to be present in a PPP.

A PPP was described as a system of interdependent components (Twachtman-Cullen & Twachtman-Reilly, 2002). The interdependent components of a PPP included the annual goals for a particular student that were derived on the basis of the priority of the individual's needs that were expressed in the present levels of performance and expressed in the instructional objectives (Twachtman-Cullen & Twachtman-Reilly, 2002). Twachtman-Cullen and Twachtman-Reilly (2002) presented the goal as being the general purpose of that year's program for the student and the accompanying objectives as presenting the sequential order of required skills to achieve that particular goal. Objectives were too often written in a manner that left them immeasurable (Twachtman-Cullen & Twachtman-Reilly, 2002). Mager (1997) wrote that the following characteristics must be included within the body of a particular objective: (1) what the student is expected to be able to do; (2) under which conditions the student is expected to complete said task or perform said skill; and (3) the level of competence that must be reached or surpassed. Even though each author (Arena, 2001; Mager, 1997; Twachtman-Cullen & Twachtman-Reilly, 2002) mentioned in this section used different phrases or analogies to describe the PPP, the literature presents a consensus that the PPP is a complex system made of many components that

specify the measurable goal (or short-term objective), the person(s) responsible for facilitating that goal (or objective), and the strategies that are to be used. The Saskatchewan Ministry of Education requires SMART goals and short term objectives to be the writing technique used in PPPs. The following section provides a detailed description of SMART annual outcomes and short term objectives.

***SMART Goals and Short Term Objectives.*** Similarities and differences exist amongst the thoughts and theories of goal and objective writing. Saskatchewan Ministry of Education (2008; Saskatchewan Learning, 2006a) utilized similar techniques for the writing of short term and long term objectives as did authors such as Eaker et al. (2002) and Twachtman-Cullen and Twachtman-Reilly (2002). Eaker et al. (2002) echoed Twachtman-Cullen and Twachtman-Reilly's (2002) sentiment of the phenomena of immeasurable goals, and expanded on the discussion by noting that it was common for goals to also be activity-focused as opposed to results-focused. Eaker et al. (2002) presented the solution as being the SMART goal. The acronym differed (2006a) slightly from that provided by Saskatchewan Learning stands for: **S**trategic and specific; **M**easurable; **A**ttainable; **R**esults-oriented; **T**ime-bound (Eaker et al., 2002). The authors followed the acronym with one example of a SMART goal but no specific or detailed discussion of *how* to write a SMART goal was included, nor was the definition of each of the acronym's terms included. Admittedly, the authors wrote this book in a style that was more conversational than formal (Eaker et al., 2002), but a more elaborate explanation was available from other sources. Saskatchewan Learning described SMART goals as an example of writing effective goals (Saskatchewan Learning, 2006a, Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2008). Saskatchewan Learning (2006a; Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2008) used an acronym that slightly differed from that used by Eaker et al. (2002).

Saskatchewan Learning's explanation of how to write SMART goals also differed from that of Eaker et al. (2002) in terms of the depth of detail provided. An example of a SMART goal is absent from *Policy, Guidelines, and Procedures for Functional Integrated Programs*, but as an alternative the document presented its readers with a SMART outcome template which enabled the template's user to fill-in-the-blanks. The importance of SMART goals lay in its role as a key component of the rubric (Benjamin, 2007). A rubric is an evaluative measure that is called *scaling*. Goal Attainment Scaling (GAS) was one of the first forms of scaling to be used. A brief history of Goal Attainment Scaling (GAS) is provided in the next section.

### ***Goal Attainment Scaling: A Brief History***

Goal Attainment Scaling (GAS) has been a viable evaluation measure for approximately 40 years. GAS was first described by Kiresuk and Sherman (1968) as a method of evaluating the outcome of mental health treatment. GAS originated in the early 1960s during the Community Mental Health Center (CMHC) movement (Smith, 1994). Between 1963 and 1966 the CMHC Act was part of a class of programs in the United States of America that were developed at a time of great demand for evaluation measures (Rich, 1994). It appeared to be applicable to many forms of service delivery such as education, rehabilitation, medicine, corrections, nursing, chaplain training, social work, chemical dependency, and program administration (Rich, 1994). In 1969, funding was provided by the National Institute of Mental Health to develop, implement, and disseminate Goal Attainment Scaling (Smith, 1994). As a result, the Program Evaluation Resource Center in Minneapolis received several thousand inquiries regarding the description and implementation of the method (Kiresuk & Choate, 1994).

GAS was developed to assure that each individual client was assessed on scales that accurately reflected the personalized intervention objectives for that client or student. When

properly implemented, GAS was a useful tool for assuring an assessment of outcome was based upon measures that were both content relevant and realistically scaled for every student (Kiresuk et al., 1994). Kiresuk and Choate (1968) described GAS as having a "...natural affinity to education..." and more specifically to special education with its "...narrowly defined curriculum content..." and "...conditions favorable to individualization." (p. 57). Although GAS was originally designed for another field of human services and went by a different name as the rubric, which is more commonly used in present-day special education, the actual guidelines and theory shared similarities. The next portion of this literature review provides a discussion on the educational applications of GAS.

*Educational Applications of GAS.* Although GAS was initially formulated as a means to evaluate individual mental health treatment outcomes, its potential use in the educational setting was recognized very early (Smith, 1994). This natural affinity with education could be traced to the tradition of goal-oriented thinking and application in education (Smith, 1994). GAS had proven to be highly effective in specialized educational settings with more narrowly defined curriculum content and smaller classroom size, and other conditions favorable to individualization (Kiresuk et al., 1994). Smith (1994) provided the example of GAS being used in an evaluation of special education programs in Iowa. Special Education Area Education Agencies (AEA's) used a three-level evaluation process (Smith, 1994). At the first level, measures which monitored general views held by consumers of programs and services to the handicapped were applied across AEA's and local education agencies (Smith, 1994). Evaluation of a more program-specific nature was conducted at the second level. Information from levels one and three was used to set program goals. Major work priorities were scaled using GAS as shown in the example below.

The third level of evaluation, conducted by teachers and other direct service personnel, focused on specific behavior and academic skill areas of the students. This level employed many classroom evaluation techniques such as pretest and posttest change comparisons as well as GAS to set individual student goals and monitor student achievement in selected areas (Smith, 1994).

Smith (1994) provided a step-by-step guide on how to develop and scale goals. The first step of the development and scaling of a goal is to specify the Expected Level of Outcome for the Goal. A concrete understanding of the usual outcomes of intervention, the resources of the client, and amount of time planned for treatment is required in order to make an accurate prediction of an individual's expected outcome (Smith, 1968). The book also explains that the expected level is to include the nature and parameters of the expected outcomes. These specifications can be presented in quantitative terms of frequency, percentages, or intensity of occurrence of the behavior or academic challenge (Smith, 1994).

The second step of the development and scaling of a goal is to Review the Expected Level Outcome. Ensure that the expected level of outcome is written in a way that will be understood by anyone who reads it (Smith, 1994). The clarity of a goal will also simplify the tasks involved in the third and fourth steps.

The third step of goal development and scaling is to Specify the Somewhat More and Somewhat Less than Expected Levels of Outcome for the Goal. Each level of the scale will be assigned to one of five boxes. The boxes immediately above and below the expected level should be filled in with descriptions that are realistically attainable and respectively less and more favorable (Smith, 1994).

The fourth step of goal development and scaling is to Specify the Much More and Much Less than Expected Levels of Outcome. The Much More than Expected Level of Outcome level

will be written in the box located at the top of the scale, whereas the Much Less than Expected Level of Outcome will be written in the box located at the bottom of the scale. The book states “Even an extreme level represents the outcome that might be expected to occur in 5% to 10% of similar patients.” (Smith, 1994, p. 8).

The fifth step of the development and scaling of a goal is to Repeat these Scaling Steps for Each of the Three or More Goals. Each client is to have three goals developed for him or her. Each goal is to have five levels of outcome (Smith, 1994). Smith concludes this portion by warning readers to include every level so as to have the most effective scale possible (Smith, 1994). Table 1, following this paragraph, provides examples of how GAS could be utilized (Smith, 1994).

**Table 1. Goal Attainment Follow-Up Guide**

LEVEL OF ATTAINMENT	SCALE 1 CAREER PLANNING	SCALE 2 CONTROL OF ANGER	SCALE 3 SELF-ESTEEM
Much less than expected -2	Has not chosen any preferred fields	Less than 25% of time	Generally negative regard (feels worthless)
Somewhat less than expected -1	One or more fields chosen but no planning	At least 25% of time	More negative features than positive
Expected level of outcome 0	Selected one or more fields with plans for achieving at least one	Controlled anger at least 50% of time in last 2 weeks (self-report)	Feels that his positive and negative features are about equal
Somewhat more than expected +1	Has followed through with plan (interview, etc.)	At least 65% of time	More positive features than negative
Much more than expected +2	Acquired job in a selected field	At least 85% of time	Generally positive regard for self

A brief discussion of the required resources for GAS is provided below.

**Required Resources of GAS.** Good management practices, effort, and resources were listed as requirements to institute any change (Eaker et al., 2003; Kiresuk et al., 1994). To ensure that SMART goals were implemented effectively, certain components and resources were necessary: a trained staff, time to allow the staff to use the technique properly, and administrative

support (Eaker et al., 2003; Kiresuk et al., 1994). The setting of goals, and the follow-up to determine their degree of attainment needed to be completed by appropriately trained individuals who have required resources at their disposal (Eaker et al., 2003; Kiresuk et al., 1994). A brief discussion of the required preparation for GAS follows this section. Prior to any application of GAS decisions were required on a variety of issues, such as who would be responsible for setting goals, who would follow-up on the goals and record levels of attainment, and how will recorded levels of attainment be scored (Eaker et al., 2003; Kiresuk et al., 1994). One of the first decisions required in any application of GAS is who should formulate the goals. Even though Saskatchewan Learning (2006b) requirements named the certified special education teacher as the sole individual who must have taken part in the design of a PPP, a variety of individuals could be involved in the design individualized goals for each student: the special education teacher could independently set all the goals for each student but also might elect to have colleagues, the student, and the student's family to participate in setting some or all of the goals (Kiresuk et al., 1994). The overall purpose of the application and the availability of required resources must be a major factor when considering who should be involved in the setting of the goals (Eaker et al., 2003; Kiresuk et al., 1994). The choice of method of implementation of GAS and what resources are required would be affected by who was involved in the setting of the goals (Kiresuk et al., 1994). The participating goal setters would also have an effect on the interpretation and credibility of the results.

Scaling continues to be a valuable evaluative measure in education. Certain characteristics of the original GAS scale, such as language and basic structural elements, have been modified in order to meet various evaluative objectives. GAS provided a theoretical

framework for rubrics specifically designed for educational settings. A discussion of the rubrics used in present day Special Education is provided in the next section.

### ***Saskatchewan Learning Published Rubrics***

Prior to 2006 Saskatchewan Learning had produced many guidelines and provided many examples of rubrics for the regular classroom setting, but no examples or mention of rubrics designed for a special education setting were available in the organization's publications. The majority of documents provided by Saskatchewan Learning were designed for a specific subject or assignment and did not provide guidelines that were often appropriate for the PPP process. In conjunction with the Saskatchewan Professional Development Unit, Erlandson (2005) provided guidelines that were general enough to be useful to a general or special education teacher, but not completely conducive to PPP process.

The step-by-step guide to designing a rubric, as described by Erlandson (2005), could be used to design a holistic rubric or an analytical rubric. A holistic rubric was defined the term as "...a guide for scoring a piece of work as a whole based on its overall impression and effectiveness" (Erlandson, 2005, p. 7). An analytical rubric lists the essential features of a task and then describes levels of performance related to each of those features (Erlandson, 2005). The analytical rubric was described as being the most appropriate for providing detailed information to students, teachers and parents on individual student strengths and areas for improvement (Erlandson, 2005). The step-by-step rubric guide was intended for a general educator's use, but could be modified to suit the needs of the PPP process.

Step one could require some modifications dependent upon the student's ability to self reflect (Erlandson, 2005). In the first step, models of the performance or product were to be reviewed. During a class discussion, examples of student work at that grade level were to be

examined. The characteristics that distinguished “good” work from the other samples provided were to be analyzed. In conjunction with the recommended PPP process this step should also include reviewing assessment results and reviewing other information gathered by or from other team members. Smith (1994) presented a similar first step in his guideline, but did not go into detail on how one was to develop a concrete understanding of the student or situation.

The second step involved the establishment of criteria (Erlandson, 2005). The criteria that were to be used in the assessment of the performance or product could be expected to emerge out of the discussion of the models. The characteristics evident in the exemplary work were to become the criteria.

The third step provided by Erlandson (2005) does not correspond with the guidelines provided by Smith (1998) or Saskatchewan Learning (2006a) which recommended five levels to be used with every rubric. The number of levels in the rubric were then to be determined. It was recommended that three levels would be appropriate for rubrics that were to be used for younger students, you will probably only want to have three levels in the rubric and four or five levels to be used for older students (Erlandson, 2005). The author did not provide an exact description of the ages that were being spoken of. Erlandson (2005) explained that the four level system is desirable because it prohibited a person from choosing the middle, however, five levels allow for more precision and supported the idea of growth for the student.

Erlandson’s (2005) work was similar to Smith’s (1968) with how it provided guidance in the sense that it stated that the designer of the rubric was to base the descriptions of criteria on past work, and encouraged the reader to use parallel language between the different levels of a rubric. Erlandson’s (2005) work differed from Smith’s guidelines by suggesting that the reader begin with the highest and lowest levels as opposed to Smith’s suggestion of beginning with the

expected level of performance. Another contrast was present in Erlandson's omission of quantitative measures.

The fourth step involved the creation of descriptions of quality for each level of the criteria. Examining work samples was to create an understanding of the descriptions that correspond to each of the levels. The highest and lowest levels of quality were to be described and then the remaining levels were to be described. Parallel language was to be used among the levels and focus was to be placed upon the observable elements that demonstrated understandable. Language was to be clear and concise and absent of evaluative words.

Step five would need to be modified for the use of the PPP process so that only team members would have access to the rubrics. This could include the student that the PPP is intended for if the student was involved in the development of his or her own PPP. In the fifth step the students were to be given ample practice time to ensure they were comfortable with using the rubric.

The sixth step involved revising the goal, with student involvement, and was to occur throughout the year as necessary. Even though Erlandson (2005) designed this particular rubric process to be useful in many different educational settings, the lacking of certain criteria for Special Education process, such as the need for five different levels of criteria and the need for privacy of the student to be ensured would make this particular rubric not appropriate for the PPP process. The next section discusses how the effectiveness of PPP development can be improved by making it a collaborative process.

### ***A Brief Note on Quality***

The term *quality* could be defined as "...managing the continuous improvement of service delivery processes and outcomes through data-driven strategies and empowered staff to

exceed customer expectations” (Benjamin, 2007, p. 2). Components of a quality strategy for meeting objectives were reminiscent of Saskatchewan Learning’s descriptions of the PPP development process: “Whether these tools have four steps or seven steps, they have four basic components: problem definition data collection to verify the root cause of the problem, solution generation and action planning, including a mechanism for tracking how well the chosen solution works” (p. 2). The data collection Benjamin (2007) referred to could be viewed as being the same as the first step of the PPP process (Saskatchewan Learning, 2006a). Solution generation and action planning (Benjamin, 2007) could be an appropriate description of the PPP process and the term *mechanism for tracking* appropriately describes a rubric outcome (Saskatchewan Learning, 2006a). The similarities between the two published works suggested that the two described processes shared a common purpose: to provide a systematic strategy that ensured a quality product (i.e., an educational program that was best suited to the needs of an individual student). Benjamin (2007) also stated that a review of relevant literature revealed teamwork to be one of the key elements of quality. Dettmer et al. (1993), Reinhiller (1999), and Saskatchewan Learning (2006a) considered teamwork to be closely related to the concept of *collaboration*. Considering that teamwork and, its counterpart, collaboration are key elements of quality and the PPP could be considered a quality strategy by Benjamin’s (2007) standards, the two entities, collaboration and the PPP process, could be considered synonymous. An explanation of how collaboration has evolved through the years as a key element in the school environment is provided in the next section.

### ***Collaboration: A Brief History***

During the 1970s educators witnessed a surge of school reform, mainly in the area of special education, propelled by reports, proposals, and legislative mandates (Dettmer et al.,

2002). This reformation of education continued on into the present in the form of three waves (Dettmer et al., 2002; Reese, 2002; Warren, 2005). The earliest wave of reform focused on accountability, lengthening of school days and years, and increased investments of time, money, and effort in education (Dettmer et al., 2002; Warren, 2005). This wave brought new initiatives such as the continuum of service option and the concept of least restrictive environment (Dettmer et al., 2002).

The second wave of reform placed more decision-making responsibility into the hands of individual schools (Michaels, 1988). The 1980s were marked by calls for collaboration between special education personnel and general education personnel in providing services within the general classroom (Will, 1986). Such initiatives as mainstreaming of students with severe disabilities into general education and a regular education initiative for students with mild to moderate disabilities occurred during this time (Will, 1986). Early intervention and prevention was to be provided to avoid the development of more serious learning deficiencies in students with disabilities (Dettmer et al., 2002). This change in the decision-making process promoted the development of cooperation amongst school personnel, and families, as well as developing a sense of freedom for schools to personalize school environments and curriculum to suit the needs of the school's population (Dettmer et al., 2002).

The third wave of education reform, which occurred in the 1990s, involved the merger of special and general education to create one inclusive system (Dettmer, 2002). The late 1990s were marked by a surge of increased collaboration between professionals and parents (Baines & Selta, 1999; Warren, 2005). General education teachers were expected to take part in the design of the Individual Education Plan (IEP) and parents had more access to their children's records and more detailed information was provided in the IEPs (Dettmer, 2002). Full inclusion was to

occur for individuals with severe learning disabilities and inclusion with a continuum of services was to be provided for individuals with mild to moderate disabilities (Dettmer, 2002).

The 1990s also saw a paradigm shift toward collaboration between schools and community agencies and individual members, referred to as *community links* by Mills (1996) to promote parental involvement, school reform, professional development of teachers, and students' academic success (Comer, 1997; Eaker et al., 2002). Collaboration was to be used to optimize available resources and provide seamless, not fragmented, services (Rosenblum et al., 1995). Collaboration with community members and/or agencies was to be used to provide a school's population with health, daycare, and family support, as well as cultural and linguistic services (Bhavnagri et al., 2006; Warren, 2005). The following portion of the Literature Review discusses the various definitions of the term *collaboration*.

### ***Definitions of the Term Collaboration***

Throughout the literature, numerous authors struggled with the many ways that the term *collaboration* has been defined (Bhavnagri et al., 2006; Reinhiller, 1999; and Warren, 2005). Even though a great variance existed in the literature, there were similarities present amongst the definitions in the literature (Dettmer et al., 1993; Reinhiller, 1999). The majority of the literature on the topic of collaboration stressed that effective collaboration involved the following components: (1) individuals maintained the authority and influence to address their common concerns; (2) trust and cooperation must be the common threads that sew the different phases of the process together; and (3) individual members of the collaborative team were entitled and encouraged to remain creative, flexible, and (4) continue to combine unconventional ingredients in novel ways to achieve the desired outcomes (Bhavnagri et al., 2006; Dettmer et al., 2002; Reinhiller, 1999; Saskatchewan Learning, 1999; and Warren, 2005). The characteristics that are

detailed by Friend and Cook (1991) were echoed in a variety of literature that followed its publication; they discussed that each professional must have willingly taken part in collaboration in order for the process to be successful. Team members not only shared resources, such as time and materials, but also responsibility for decisions and outcomes of the collaborative process. The authors pointed out that even if collaborative activities were mandated by administration it was truly the decision of each team member whether or not he or she would participate (Cook and Friend, 1991).

Cook and Friend (1991) used a term that was not present in any of the other pieces of studied literature: *emergent characteristics*. The authors explained that there were certain characteristics that were in a school setting prior to initiation of collaborative activities (Cook and Friend, 1991). These emergent characteristics included a sense of trust amongst school personnel and a shared belief amongst the staff that collaboration is a worthwhile process.

Saskatchewan Learning (1999) labelled collaborative team work as a key element to the successful design of the Personal Program Plan. That document described collaboration as being a shared work where two or more people cooperatively problem solved and created an action plan. This limitation of at least two people being involved in the process was a universal component in the literature. Like so many other pieces of literature before it, the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education (2008d) pointed out that even though it may be an easy concept to consider, the actual practice for collaboration can be a difficult one to initiate due to the varying points of view that can exist in a interdisciplinary group of professionals (Saskatchewan Learning, 1999).

Both Dettmer et al. (1993) and Reinhiller (1999) used the term *collaborative school consultation*. Dettmer et al. (1993) defined the term: “Collaborative school consultation is

interaction in which school personnel and families confer, consult, and collaborate as a team to identify learning and behavioral needs and to plan, implement, evaluate, and revise as needed the educational programs that are expected to serve those need.” (p. 6). Collaborative consultation could occur in many different formats most share the following traits: “...(a) indirect service delivery with a triadic mode(consultant-consultee-client), (b) collaborative professional relationships based on equity not expertise, (c) recognition of its voluntary nature and confidentiality, (d) a problem solving orientation, and (e) attention to the twofold goals of immediate problem solving and increased knowledge for everyone” (Reinhiller, 1999, p. 179). With her discussion on collaborative consultation Reinhiller provided a rare definition of a term that is used often in the literature but seldom defined. Reinhiller (1999) also used two terms that are often used in the literature, but rarely defined: *teamwork* and *collaborative consultant*. The term *teamwork* was defined as being “A number of persons associated in some joint action where they work cooperatively together joining forces or efforts, with each individual contributing a clearly-defined portion of the effort, but also subordinating personal prominence to the efficiency of the whole” (Dettmer et al., 1993, p. 5). The term *collaborative consultant* was closely linked with *collaborative consultation* and was defined by Dettmer et al. (1993): “A collaborative school consultant is a facilitator of effective communication, cooperation, and coordination who confers, consults, and collaborates with other school personnel, support personnel, and families on a team that addresses special learning and behavioral needs of students” (p. 6).

Like Saskatchewan Learning (2006a), Dettmer et al. (1993) attempted to improve their readers’ understanding of the term *teamwork*. Although there are similarities between collaboration and teamwork, the most defining difference between the two is the absence of *problem solving* in the definition for teamwork (Dettmer et al., 1993). Teamwork occurred when

two or more people have a particular assignment or project that they were determined to complete as a group (Dettmer et al., 1993). An example of teamwork would be that of co-teaching which involves two teachers with the common goal of teaching a group of students (Dettmer et al., 1993).

It is possible for the special education teacher to act as consultant, but the role of consultant is determined by the individual's level of expertise for that particular topic or situation (Dettmer et al., 1993; Reinhiller, 1999). This viewpoint of the collaborative consulting role is also reminiscent of how the document *Policy, Guideline, and Procedures for Functional Integrated Programs* (Saskatchewan Learning, 2006a) mentioned that the facilitator of the PPP meeting did not have to be the special educator, but that the role must be taken by someone who had effective facilitation skills.

Saskatchewan Learning (2006a) often used the term 'collaborative team' which was described as a concept that is a combination and extension of collaboration and the definition of the *education team*. The purpose of the collaborative team was to willingly share knowledge about their professional disciplines in order to meet the needs of the student in such natural contexts as school, home and in the community (Saskatchewan Learning, 1999). Saskatchewan Learning stated that it was the responsibility and the prerogative of the team to choose to work as a cohesive group with role parity (Saskatchewan Learning, 1999).

Just as some authors struggled with the numerous perspectives of the collaborative process, so it was with the matter of the numerous perspectives and definitions that exist about the topic of collaboration (Cook & Friend, 1991; Dettmer et al., 1993). A number of authors discussed the use of the word *style* in their definition of collaboration (Cook & Friend, 1991; Dettmer et al., 1993). To further develop understanding on the collaboration the authors

provided what they refer to as structural elements. (Dettmer et al., 1993). One other term that is used in numerous writings but is seldom defined: *problem solving* (Dettmer et al., 1993).

For many years a precise definition for the term *collaboration* has eluded authors and researchers. Intertwining perspectives and components that exist within the entity referred to as *collaboration*, as well its similarities to terms, such as *teamwork*, have made the task of finding a definitive description a complicated task. A discussion of another strategy some authors have utilized in an attempt to elaborate on the term *collaboration* is included in the next section.

### ***Structural Elements of Collaboration***

To further develop the term *collaboration* many authors provided discussion on what Dettmer et al. (2002) referred to as *structural elements*. These elements included the systems, approaches, and models of the collaborative process (Dettmer et al., 2002; Mills, 1996). The systems in which team members served students with special needs include home and family, medical, community, school, and community (Dettmer et al, 1993). The term *approach* referred to whether the collaborative process was informal, such as with a spontaneous meeting in the staffroom, or formal, such as a scheduled PPP meeting (Dettmer et al., 1993). Dettmer et al. (1993) defined models as "...patterns, examples for imitation, representations in miniature, descriptions, analogies, or displays" (p. 52).

A sampling of the models available to collaborative teams is detailed below. The most traditionally used of the models was noted as being the triadic model which included three roles-consultant, consultee, and client (Tharp, 1975; Tharp & Wetzel, 1969). The Resource/Consulting Teacher Program Model was based on the triadic model and enabled the resource room teacher to provide direct service to his/her students through instruction and indirect service in the form of consultation with classroom teachers for portions of the school day (Idol et al., 1986). The

School Consultation Committee model involved a committee, a special education teacher, a primary classroom teacher, upper-grade classroom teacher, and the principal working collaboratively as a source of consultation for other staff members (McGlothlin, 1981). The collaborative consultation model involved only two team members (consultant and consultee) who proceeded with the collaborative process as equal team members (Idol, 1986). The Stephens/Systems Model involved five phases and was very reminiscent of the PPP format outlined in Saskatchewan Learning documents. The model consisted of assessment, observation, data collection, planning, finding ways of resolving the problem, implementation of the plan measurement of progress; evaluation, and data analysis (Dettmer et al., 1993). The Resource/Consulting Teacher Program Model was based on the triadic model and enabled the resource room teacher to provide direct service to his or her students through instruction and indirect service in the form of consultation with classroom teachers for portions of the school day (Dettmer et al., 1993). The school consultation committee model involved a committee including a special education teacher, a primary classroom teacher, upper-grade classroom teacher, and the principal working collaboratively as a source of consultation for other staff members (Dettmer et al., 1993). The collaborative consultation model involved only two team members (consultant and consultee) who proceeded with the collaborative process as equal team members. While some authors chose to discuss collaboration as an entity, others chose to discuss it as a process; the following section is a discussion of the latter approach to the topic of collaboration.

### ***Collaboration as a Process***

Some authors chose not to focus on the definition of collaboration as an entity, but as a process which consisted of interconnecting and overlapping phases. Although the phases of the collaborative process were described in different ways and used slightly different terminology,

some common elements were present in the literature (Gable et al., 2004). The primary phase was to be initiated during signs of student academic underachievement and/or behavior problems (Cook & Friend, 1991; Dettmer et al., 2002; Gable et al., 2004; Reinhiller, 1999). This phase was described as often consisting of a student's regular classroom teacher notifying a colleague or the school team of concerns, for the student in question, of an academic, personal or social nature (Gable et al., 2004). The secondary phase involved the appropriate informal and formal analysis of the assessment results; developing a plan for effective instruction that is acceptable to the referring teacher; delineation of the team roles, and responsibilities; development of a monitoring and evaluation plan; and, lastly, implementation of the plan (Dettmer et al., 2002; Gable et al., 2004; and Reinhiller, 1999). The tertiary phase occurred when the collaborative process for a particular student(s) had concluded or was expected to do so in the near future (Dettmer et al., 2002; Gable et al., 2004). This phase involved an evaluation in which each team member was responsible for identifying their own strengths and weaknesses in what Gable et al. (2004) termed *collaborative behavior* (or the manner in which one behaved during a collaborative activity). A set of terms that were unique to this article was the different categories of *stakeholders* (or team members) that the authors assigned based on the intensity of interaction between the student and team member (Gable et al., 2004). The three categories are: close proximity, middle proximity, and distant proximity (Gable et al. 2004).

The collaborative process included problem identification and description, development of intervention, implementation, and evaluation as the general steps required in problem solving (Reinhiller, 1999). Two separate intervention formats for approaching collaborative relationships were provided (Reiniller, 1999). The first format Reinhiller (1999) discussed was entitled *ACT*. The author explained that this format was best suited for general educators as the ownership of

the entire process lay heavily in the hands of the general educator as the special education teacher acted as facilitator (Reinhiller, 1999). The term is an acronym for the steps the general educator was to take during the intervention process: **A**nalyze the concern; **C**hoose an intervention; **T**ry the plan as well as evaluating the program's progress (Reinhiller, 1999, p. 178).

The format of collaboration that was best suited to this discussion was that of the inclusive teaching format entitled *INCLUDE*. This intervention process involved seven steps: **I**dentify classroom demands; **N**ote student learning strengths and needs; **C**heck potential areas of student success; **L**ook for potential problem areas; **U**se information gathered to brainstorm instructional adaptations; **D**ecide which adaptations to implement; **E**valuate student progress (Reinhiller, 1999, p.179). This format was most appropriate for moments, such as discussion of class placement, when the regular classroom teacher and special education teacher were both involved in a more formal meeting that would involve more extensive resources and time (Reinhiller, 1999).

Saskatchewan Learning (1999) also detailed a pair of elements of collaborative teamwork. These 2 elements were *integrated* and *trans disciplinary* instructional approaches (Saskatchewan Learning, 1999). The definitions for the two terms were defined as follows:

Integrated instruction is when functional motor, communication, social competence and other skills are learned as part of natural routines in regularly scheduled school and community environments. Trans disciplinary instruction occurs when information and skills among team members are shared across traditional discipline domains (e.g., the occupational therapist sharing with the teacher) (Saskatchewan Learning, 1999, p. 3).

It is this sharing, Saskatchewan Learning (1999) explained, that would provide a satisfactory foundation from which a program could be developed that all team members would approve of.

Saskatchewan Learning (2001) provided the reader with a rare opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of how to implement problem solving within the collaborative setting.

Although the document did not provide a definition for the term, it presented the reader with a five step process for the problem solving process. The steps included: define the problem; identify the causes; generate and consider alternatives (I.E., What can be done to reduce the barriers and increase the capacities of the child?); decide and implement strategies; monitoring for success (evaluation). This particular step refers strictly to the evaluation of the outcome that occurred due to the problem solving activity, it does not include an evaluation of the collaborative process itself (Saskatchewan Learning, 2001). A discussion of the rationale for collaboration is included in the following section.

### ***Rationale for Collaboration***

There was an overwhelming consensus presented in the literature that collaboration is a key component to the planning, development, and monitoring of a student's PPP. This belief was evident in articles, and books, as well in government-issued documents. Throughout the literature certain themes became apparent in relation to the rationale for collaboration to occur in the school setting.

Saskatchewan Learning (2001) stated "(Collaboration) is a catalyst for inclusion, teacher empowerment and developing individualized instruction. The collaborative process provides the opportunity to merge unique skills, foster positive interdependence, develop creative problem solving and enhance accountability for individual responsibilities" (p. 10). Closely related to this idea of merging skills, knowledge and effort was the concept of avoiding isolation.

Saskatchewan Learning (2001) promoted collaboration as the solution to isolation by going as far as referring to it as "...a safeguard against the dangers of isolation" (Saskatchewan Learning, 2001, p. 10). Collaboration can offer the solution to this problem by nurturing creative, caring and supportive school communities. The discussion for the rationale for collaboration was

concluded by stating that “Collaboration has long been a suggested *criterion of ultimate functioning* in educational philosophy. Over time, collaboration has remained a trusted and true *best practice* for enhancing teaching and learning environments” (Saskatchewan Learning, 2001, p. 12). Not only did this comment reflect the words of other authors but also demonstrated the values that the governing body of this province were influenced by while developing the policies that special educators and school teams were to follow.

A unique perspective on how collaboration could affect the school climate was that collaboration could encourage the development of positive attitudes toward students with disabilities and inclusive educational practice (Saskatchewan Learning, 2001). Collaboration could benefit non-disabled peers in the classroom through improved supports and learning. Average developing classmates benefited from additional time provided by the extra personnel in the room and from the improved instruction resulting from professional consultation (Saskatchewan Learning, 2001).

Saskatchewan Learning (2001) concluded the discussion for the rationale of collaboration by stating that “Collaboration has long been a suggested *criterion of ultimate functioning* in educational philosophy. Over time, collaboration has remained a trusted and true *best practice* for enhancing teaching and learning environments” (p. 12). Not only does this comment reflect the words of other authors but also demonstrates the values that the governing body of this province were influenced by while developing the policies that special educators and school teams are to follow.

A unique theory for the existence of collaboration was that of the evolution of the school system (Dettmer et al., 1993). During the period of 1970 to 1999 that education faced issues such as accountability, cost containment, and growing concerns over labeling of students led to the

merger of general education and special education (Dettmer et al., 1993). This merger and the reform of individual school as the unit of decision making created an environment that could foster the birth of collaborative practices (Dettmer et al., 1993).

Another rationale was that diversity, in terms of viewpoints, perspectives, and problem solving approaches, naturally occurred in collaborative teams (Dettmer et al., 1993). A perspective was defined as "...an aspect or object of thought from a particular viewpoint" (Dettmer et al., 1993, p. 48). Having the opportunity to reflect on different point of views tended to enhance the quality of problem solving for the collaborative team (Dettmer et al., 1993). Dettmer et al. (1993) pointed out that "If an individual needs to solve a problem alone, he or she must manage multiple perspectives, but problem solving by a well-mixed team of individuals enables most perspectives to be represented efficiently" (p. 48) .

Eaker et al. (2002) provided a conceptual framework for establishing a Professional Community of Learners (PLC). The purpose of the book was to provide direction in reculturing schools from what the authors refer to as "traditional schools" to schools where a PLC could flourish. Collaboration was the first element listed as an ingredient in the foundation from which a PLC was to grow from (Eaker et al., 2002). "Schools that function as professional learning communities are always characterized by a collaborative culture" (Eaker et al. 2002, p. 37). Collaboration could act as one of many building blocks that schools would be able to provide their community with clear mission statements, value statements that articulate behaviors and commitments, goals that are linked to the vision statement and an all around culture shift that include an evolution in teaching and administration (Eaker et al., 2002).

There was consensus in the literature about how the absence of collaboration in a school setting could promote a sensation of isolation amongst staff members. Isolation would promote

loneliness and lacking in the need to feel personal accomplishment and to feel that our lives have meaning (Eaker et al., 2002; Saskatchewan Learning 2001, 2006a, & 2006b). A rare perspective on collaboration: the need for "...empirical research on the fidelity of implementation of intervention plans that stem from professional collaboration." (Gable et al., 2004, p. 4) The authors continued by explaining that the little research that has been conducted focuses on process rather than its outcomes (Gable et al., 2004). The ever growing demands of a school environment are best left in the hands of a cooperative group of colleagues rather than one person (Dettmer et al., 1993; Gable et al., 2004; Eaker et al., 2002; Saskatchewan Learning, 1991; 2001; 2006b). Like so many authors before them, Gable et al. also suggested that collaboration can be the answer to that ever-present risk of professionals feeling isolated, with a point from Cook and Friend that it "...fosters a sense of shared responsibility for educating heterogeneous groups of students." (Gable et al., 2004, p. 4). The collaborative process could foster social and professional relationships (Gable et al., 2004). They also cited factors such as mandated legislation, diverse school populations, increased numbers of students at risk, and the growing popularity of collaboration as possible catalysts for collaboration (Gable et al., 2004).

More validity could be brought to the school's collaborative process by providing empirical proof of its value (Gable et al., 2004). Great concern was expressed in the literature about how few studies have focused on the rate of success for accurately implemented collaborative processes (Gable et al., 2004). To answer this predicament, Gable et al. (2004) propose an assessment model that school personnel could use to evaluate their own collaborative interventions. The purpose of the assessment was to provide the opportunity to address both the collaborative process and the outcome together (Gable et al., 2004). Variables such as student demographics, levels of teacher preparation and experience, administrative faculty support, the

approach (or what Reinhiller referred to as format), the nature of the targeted academic and/or behavior problems and desired outcomes were labeled as factors that could affect the ease of evaluation (Gable et al., 2004; Reinhiller, 1999). The designers of the assessment argued that, at the very least, the assessment they designed could be used to assess objective measures of students' academic and behavioral progress (Gable et al., 2004). The resources required for the effective and efficient application of the collaborative process are discussed in the next section.

### ***Required Resources of Collaboration***

In order to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of the collaborative process, access to a variety of individual resources and/or varying combinations of resources was required by the collaborative team (Mills, 1996). Common themes presented in the literature were: money, time, appropriate professional development, and supportive leadership (Eaker et al., 2002; Johnson et al., 1988; Mills, 1996; Warren, 2005). Although the topic of money was a common theme presented in the literature, no specific details to the required amount or how these funds were to be procured were discussed. No matter what concrete resources a collaborative team has access to the effectiveness of a PPP depends greatly upon the collaborative effectiveness of the process. The next section provides a discussion of possible evaluation techniques for the collaborative process.

### ***Evaluation of the Collaborative Process***

Very little existing literature had focused on the evaluation of the collaborative process; this statement was reinforced by the lack of discussion available on the topic in the literature (Gable et al., 2004). There were two major purposes of evaluation: formative and summative (Popham, 1988). Formative evaluation was intended for making decisions to modify, change, or refine a collaborative plan during its implementation (Popham, 1988). Summative evaluation

documented the attainment of program goals and required data collected from larger groups than that of formative evaluation (Dettmer et al., 2002; Popham, 1988).

Gable et al. (2004) proposed a model of assessment for both the collaborative process and also the multi-levels of stakeholders. Each team member was to gauge each of the aspects of collaboration using Likert-type ratings with a score range of one (representing a rating of 'poor') to five (representing a score of 'outstanding') (Gable et al., 2004). The results of the evaluation were then to be used to find an average of the three phases that Gable et al. (2004) described in their article (primary, secondary, and tertiary) as well as calculate a global score. Two open-ended questions were provided in the evaluation to discuss suggestions for changes to be made to the collaborative process and any other comments team members wished to make (Gable et al., 2004).

The assessment was designed to evaluate the content and context of the collaborative process by investigating four areas. The first area to be evaluated was the intensity of the collaborative effort. This area was to be evaluated in terms of both the amount of time and "...depth of problem scrutiny across the collaborative process and amongst the various stakeholders." (Dettmer et al., 2002 ; Gable et al, 2004). The second area to be evaluated was the collaborative process. The evaluation of the collaborative process was to include the team members evaluating the collaboration's effectiveness either among the collaborative phases or individual stakeholders' proximities (Gable et al., 2004; Johnson et al., 2003). The third area to be evaluated was the collaborative outcomes. This evaluation was to include team members evaluating the success of the collaboration's outcomes both across the different collaborative phases and for each stake holder (Dettmer et al., 2002; Gable et al., 2004). The fourth area to be evaluated was the need to make any changes. The main purpose of this portion of the evaluation

was to review the data collected from the previous portions of the evaluations as to make any changes to future collaborative activities (Cheney, 1998). A discussion of possible interfering themes of collaboration is included in the next section of this literature review.

### ***Interfering Themes of Collaboration***

Elements that could interfere with the effectiveness of the collaborative process were occasionally referred to as *barriers* in the literature. The unequal distribution of prior knowledge on a topic was mentioned as being a possible barrier in building onto the groups shared knowledge (Dettmer et al., 1993; Twachtman-Cullen & Twachtman-Reilly, 2002). Closely related to this concept was potential for the lacking of skills of individual participants, such as communication and facilitation, to interfere with the collaborative process (Dettmer et al., 1993). Other differing factors that could also affect our point of view on a topic such as age, and gender, socioeconomic, racial, ethnic, religious backgrounds (Dettmer, 1993; Hilton & Ringlaben, 1998).

Like Dettmer et al. (1993), Reinhiller (1999) mentioned a person's lack of knowledge about a condition or situation as a possible barrier for collaboration. Reinhiller (1999) described the lack of time in the school day for teachers to meet to discuss the needs of their students and the possible imbalance of knowledge about special education between special educator and general educator as possible barriers. A general consensus existed in the literature claiming intrinsic factors, such as race, gender, and age, as a major factor that could possibly act as interferences for the collaborative process. Other possible interfering themes or barriers, such as communication and facilitation skills, could be lessened or eliminated by having participants trained in those areas of deficiency.

## *Summary*

For many years collaboration has been a foundational component for the PPP process. Although collaboration had long been a building block for the PPP process, it had done so under the premise of a guideline. Questions now arise from the existence of a new requirement that states that rubric outcome sampling must be included in the PPP process. Saskatchewan Learning had also suggested, in its guidelines, that SMART goals be used in accompaniment with the rubric outcomes. Saskatchewan Learning ensured that special education teachers have received training in both the design of SMART goals and rubrics, but will this now lead to an unequal balance of knowledge amongst collaborative PPP teams? Further study was required on the perspective of the special education teacher in relation to this newly gained knowledge that now sets him or her apart from the rest of his or her team members and how it affected the collaborative effort.

## Chapter Three: Methodology

### *Overview*

Dewey (1933) referred to a problem as anything that “perplexes and challenges the mind so that it makes belief...uncertain” (p. 72). A research problem can be inspired from literature, life experiences, a theory, and social or political issues (Dewey, 1933). The inspiration for this proposal came from the researcher’s own experiences with writing SMART goals as a collaborative effort as a resource room teacher. SMART is an acronym that is meant to act as a reminder for the PPP team to create goals that are: **S**pecifically written in clear language; **M**easurable in order to allow the students achievement to be described, assessed and evaluated; **A**chievable and realistic for the student; **R**elevant and meaningful for the student; **T**ime-related and can be accomplished within a specific time period (Saskatchewan Learning, 2006a). The rubric outcome sampling has been a requirement for funding in the province of Saskatchewan since 2006, whereas the SMART goal remained a guideline until 2008 (Saskatchewan Learning, 2006a; Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2008b).

As a resource room teacher, one of my greatest concerns was to foster a collaborative and supportive environment for all of the PPP team members. An environment which nurtures a certain level of comfort, with the task of writing a PPP and amongst the team members themselves, will promote the creation of an effective PPP (Dettmer et al., 1993; Saskatchewan Learning, 2006a; Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2008b). As the protocol for writing PPPs becomes more defined, I was curious to see whether or not this phenomenon will help or hinder the collaborative process.

### ***Research Design***

The research design included a descriptive case study. A descriptive case study can be defined as a case study that presents a detailed account of the phenomenon presented in the study (Merriam, 1988). This type of study can be used to study a topic in any field, but in an educational setting it is useful for presenting basic information about educational topics such as innovative programs and practices (Merriam, 1988). The study included an embedded single-case study having three subunits. Each subunit consisted of one resource room teacher who is teaching in a central Saskatchewan urban school division at the elementary level. Each resource room teacher was asked to select one student who has met the requirement with either a cognitive, behavioural, or multiple disability and has had previous PPP documents written for him or her (i.e., this is not the student's first year of meeting the criteria for Intensive Supports) by that particular resource room teacher. The resource room teachers were asked to incorporate, at the very minimum, at least one legal guardian of the student, one administrator, and any paraprofessional that was assigned to work with the child in the collaborative PPP process.

### ***Gaining Entry***

The first task of the case study was to gain entry. Gaining entry involved deciding upon appropriate sites, making an initial contact, determining the best form of communication, deciding how to phrase requests and answering any questions or concerns (Yin, 1994). To ease the difficult task of gaining entry I tried several strategies: (1) used social networks to gain access, (2) ensured that participants spoke English as a first language, and (3) received written permission from parents and guardians for any research that paid special attention to individual children, such as the use of or reference to a PPP document. The social networking strategy used

for this study was an e-mail sent to all of the resource room teachers of the participating school division inviting interested individuals to participate in the case study.

### ***Recruitment***

Recruitment of participants involved purposeful sampling (Yin, 1994). Non-probabilistic, or purposeful sampling, is based on the belief that the researcher wants to discover, understand, and gain insight, and therefore will select a sample from which to learn (Yin, 1994). The goal of purposeful sampling was to find information-rich cases that match a set of criteria that the researcher has selected. Recruitment occurred during the month of April, 2009.

### ***Process of Gaining Consent***

The site for this case study was a central Saskatchewan urban school division. Initial contact for this particular case study included completing the Application Form for Permission to Conduct Research (see Appendix A) in that school division. The required attachments for the form included copies of the participant consent form (see Appendix B), parent consent form (see Appendix C) and interview questions (see Appendix D-F) that were given to the subjects, and a signed letter or certificate of approval from the appropriate ethics review committee (see Appendix G). In this particular situation a consent form was needed to be completed by the parent or guardian(s) of each student who's PPP was a focus of the case study. Participants were provided with interview questions.

### ***Data Collection***

***Focus Open-ended Interviews.*** Interviewing was a key research tool for this case study. There are several types of interviews. Interviews of an open-ended nature enable the researcher to learn facts, opinions, and insights of his or her interviewees. The focused interview can still be open-ended but a respondent is interviewed for only a short period of time (an hour, for example)

(Yin, 1994). The third type of interview is called the survey and involves more structured questions. For the purpose of this study each participating resource room teacher participated in a focused open-ended interview during three separate 40 minute interviews.

The first interview occurred approximately one week prior to the PPP meeting of the designated student. The researcher conducted a focused interview that lasted no longer than one hour with each participant individually so the researcher could develop a concrete understanding of: the content of the PPP; the teacher's perception of what collaboration is, how it can best be implemented, and what resources are required for a collaborative process to be effective; and the opinion of the resource room teacher about the effectiveness of the PPP process thus far in the year. Questions focused on the resource room teachers' perceptions of to what degree his or her team members participated in the development, writing, and monitoring of the PPP.

The second interview occurred approximately 24 hours after the PPP meeting of the designated student. The second interview of each participant took place after the concluding PPP had been completed in the month of June, 2009. The focused interview was of a similar length in time. The main purpose of the interview was to develop an understanding of: the resource room teacher's present perception of the PPP process; if the team has had any difficulties with understanding how to use the SMART goals and rubric in an efficient manner; and if any changes were required to add clarity to the process, what measures were taken and to what degree.

The third interview occurred approximately one week after the June Review PPP document had been completed. The third interview occurred in the month of June, 2009. The purpose of this interview was to develop an understanding of: the resource room teacher's present perceptions of the PPP process; any challenges the team faced during the evaluation of

the PPP program; and the perceptions of the resource room teacher on how the team members reacted to the process of using the rubrics.

The interviews included the four major types of questions, including: (1) hypothetical; (2) devil's advocate; (3) ideal position; and (4) interpretive questioning. Hypothetical questions encouraged respondents to make speculations. The devil's advocate question enables the researcher to pose questions of a controversial nature by depersonalizing the issue (Merriam, 1988). Ideal position questions encouraged interviewees to respond with both information and opinion. Interpretive questions provided the researcher the opportunity to confirm her own understanding of what she was learning from the interviewee (Merriam, 1988).

Interviews were tape recorded and then transcribed. The researcher received written permission by the interviewee to record the sessions. A conversation also occurred between each interviewee and the researcher to discuss such matters as: logistics of time, location, number of interviews to be scheduled, the use of pseudonyms to ensure privacy, who will have first say over the study's content, and how no respondent will be paid, but will be offered first access to the published thesis (Merriam, 1988).

### ***Data Storage***

To maintain a sense of organization I developed and maintained a data storage system. Stake (1995) stressed the importance of selecting the people, places, and occasions that will best help a researcher understand the case. Yin (1994) stressed three principles of data collection: (1) using single and multiple sources of evidence, (2) creating a case study database, and (3) maintaining a chain of evidence (Yin, 1994). The author explained that these principles are important in order to maintain the highest standards of case study development and are relevant to all sources of evidence (Yin, 1994).

## ***Data Analysis***

Research should end once it has reached the saturation point and any information collected from that point seems redundant. Once the point of redundancy has occurred it is time to begin the analysis portion of the case study. Considering the PPP cycle in this province the logical time to end data collection was at the end of the June PPP process. Stake (1995) stated “Analysis essentially means taking something apart” (p. 43). Data analysis involves examining, categorizing, and evaluating evidence to address the study’s propositions (Yin, 1994). The strategy provided an opportunity to decide what should be analyzed and why.

The principles that guided the researcher to choose a data analysis strategy were: (1) an analysis should rely on all the relevant evidence and include the development of rival hypotheses; (2) it should include all major rival interpretations; (3) the most significant aspect of the study should be addressed; (4) similar issues and current thinking should have been taken into account during the analysis (Yin, 1994). The researcher used the most preferred strategy for analysis of the case, which is to follow the theoretical proposition that guided the case study (Yin, 1994).

The two analytic techniques that were also incorporated into the study were: pattern-matching and explanation building. Pattern-matching compares an empirically based pattern with a predicted one in order to detect coinciding patterns (Yin, 1994). If the patterns do coincide then the internal validity of the case study has been strengthened. Explanation-building is a type of complex pattern-matching. The goal of such a technique is to analyze the case study data by building an explanation about the case (Yin, 1994).

***Reporting the Findings.*** The final step of the case study was writing the report. Before beginning to write, the researcher selected a focus. Considering that the focus of a report is

influenced by the audience for which it is intended, the original purpose of the study, and the level of abstraction obtained during the analysis of the data, the researcher chose a general format for writing (Merriam, 1988).

One of the purposes of a case study is to help the phenomenon come alive for the readers. The majority of individuals reading this document will be from the education field. The researcher used generalizations to aid the readers in learning more about the phenomena by presenting information that related to their own lives. To present the information in an effective and efficient manner the following steps were taken: emphasis on the time, place and participants in the report; provided thick description; presented raw data so that readers can make their own interpretations; avoided using too much jargon; provided information about the researcher; provide the reader with reactions of data sources; and emphasized whether or not the reported happenings could have been seen (Stake, 1995).

An outline was then designed after the focus had been decided upon. The report outline used in this study included the following components: (1) entry vignette, issue identification, purpose, and method of study, (2) extensive narrative description to further define the case and contexts, (3) development of issues, (4) descriptive detail, documents, quotations, triangulating data, (5) assertions, and (6) closing vignette. I have also used a reflective reporting style, which depended upon literary devices to bring the case alive.

## Chapter 4: Results

The following chapter provides a description of the three participants of this case study and their perceptions of the effects of the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education requirements on the collaborative efforts of the PPP team. The chapter includes sections outlining each of the three participants' three separate interviews and the common themes identified in the related PPPs and rubrics, when applicable.

Certain conventions were used in the chapter. All quotes are identified with quotation marks and the speaker is noted in the text. The various quotations were taken from the participant interview as indicated in the heading. All names and places are pseudonyms. Square brackets denote participants' non-verbal body language or clarify references not explicitly identified in the excerpt. Three consecutive periods indicate portions of the interview where the participant paused mid conversation to collect her thoughts or the exclusion of a portion of the quote to ease comprehension.

### *Meredith*

Meredith has been teaching for 25 years as a resource room teacher. Her current teaching assignment is resource room teacher in a perimeter school of approximately 200 students. She is the case manager for eight PPPs and the person mainly responsible for typing PPPs in her school. A female in grade one with a diagnosis of Down Syndrome was selected by Meredith to be the focus of her three interviews. As is the case for Meredith, it is common for resource room teachers, employed by this division, to act as the case manager of a PPP even when she or he does not provide direct service to the student. Meredith's situation was unique because there was no parent in attendance for any of the three PPP meetings that occurred during the academic year

for that particular student. Meredith assured me that the parent had been invited by the regular classroom teacher for each meeting, but had chosen to not attend.

***Meredith's First Interview.*** Meredith's first interview occurred approximately 72 hours prior to the summer PPP meeting that she chose to focus on. The three SMART goals that Meredith chose to focus on for this case study were from the *Independence/Problem Solving/Work Skills* and *Academics* domains of the PPP. These goals included: (1) a goal focused on the child coming in when the bell rang; (2) expanding her sight word vocabulary; and (3) the child's ability to correctly count to 20. Meredith explained that the PPP team chose to focus upon the child's ability to come in after the bell rang because, prior to the design of this goal, the student's educational assistant (EA) was required to go outside each day and persuade the child to come back to class. Although not explicitly indicated by Meredith, I perceived both of the *Academic* goals to be appropriate since improving sight vocabulary and the ability to count sequentially are both foundational skills.

When asked if the student had progressed with the first goal, focusing on the child's ability to come in after the recess bell had rang, Meredith based her answer on observations she had made during her recess supervisions. She was confident that her fellow PPP team members would agree with her opinion, due to the fact that they had a "...good working relationship with the classroom teacher and the EA. And I always ask a lot of questions and clarify things and if there is someone who is not on the same page we get there." Admittedly, Meredith was not capable of tracking the child's academic growth on an informal basis because she did not teach the child, but was planning to administer formal assessments (she did not indicate which assessments during the first interview) and learn from informal conversation with the teacher and EA.

A barrier that challenged the collaborative effort for Meredith's PPP team was the lack of time. Meredith explained that due to the lack of time to meet, the teacher, EA, and Meredith allowed themselves 45 minutes to discuss the PPPs of two individual students. Meredith indicated that the PPP team felt this scheduling strategy was their only option due to scheduling conflicts (i.e., teaching schedules) and time restrictions (i.e., a conflict between the amount of hours in a work day and personal responsibilities outside of the work environment). She admitted that the PPP team felt rushed, due to the short amount of time that they had budgeted for the meeting, and would have appreciated more time to discuss each goal in more detail.

Meredith mentioned the differing levels of expertise and different knowledge bases amongst the PPP team members, in the context of writing SMART goals, as a possible barrier to the collaborative effort of the PPP process. She was unsure of how much training the regular classroom teacher had received in SMART goals, but assumed, based on their interactions, the teacher had not received any training. Although she did not label it as a barrier, Meredith did describe her lack of a relationship with the student as presenting her with a challenge as case manager of the PPP. Meredith explained that it was difficult for her to facilitate the writing of the Current Level of Performance of any of the goals for this child because she had not worked with that particular student. A combination of Meredith's lack of knowledge of the child's academic abilities, and the teacher's inexperience with the design of SMART goals, were a challenge the PPP team. The PPP team combated this challenge using open communication (i.e., expressing their views with the knowledge that they would not be criticized by their team members).

During our discussion, Meredith's descriptions of her team revealed other areas that could be considered as barriers to the team's collaborative efforts. She often made reference to the tentative and professional relationship she shared with the student's regular classroom

teacher, yet did not mention the professional relationship as a possible barrier to the PPP team's efforts or speak of it any sort of negative manner. Meredith explained that she had worked with the EA since Meredith's arrival at that particular school and that the classroom teacher had only worked at the school for approximately one year. She often mentioned the importance of open communication, which involved each team member freely voicing their opinion in a tactful manner. It was shortly after this comment that Meredith pointed out that tactfulness can be a challenging pursuit when the two conversing individuals are not well acquainted with one another, as was the case with her and the regular classroom teacher. Later on in the interview Meredith divulged that she attributed similar personality traits that she and the regular classroom teacher shared as a possible reason to some of the communication difficulties they were experiencing. She never chose to label the professional relationship as a possible barrier to collaboration; she only voiced her concern about the situation.

After the first interview was done Meredith had the recorder turned on again so that she could mention something that was of importance to her: the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education requiring SMART goals and rubric outcome sampling. She recognized the new requirements, made by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, as being more work for the resource room teacher. Meredith also acknowledged the requirements as an appropriate strategy to promote accountability on the behalf of the resource room teachers, regular classroom teachers, and the EAs: "...it works to making the teachers especially more accountable for their PPP kids because in the past I think, and I think it still happens a lot,...it's stuffed in a drawer and it's not looked at again until review times. And there is very little a resource teacher can do about that." Meredith expressed frustration about knowing of this occurrence, but not being able to change it due to

other contributing factors (i.e., class size and needs and an opinion that the students with Intensive Supports are the responsibility of the resource room teacher).

*Meredith's Second Interview.* During our second interview, which followed the summer PPP meeting by approximately one week, Meredith was positive about the meeting. She described it as, "Excellent...and I feel that way because the teacher brought the EA which was a surprise to me, um, so we were able to get both of their points of view, which was good." The absence of the parents did not have a negative impact on Meredith's view of the effectiveness of that particular meeting. She went so far as to describe it as:

Also excellent and that is because we got two PPPs done in 45 minutes and, uh ...we determined that there was a little bit of testing that still needed to be done on this particular student that I would do and the EA was also going to um, do a double check on a couple of things, as well finalize the rubric that goes with the PPP. So, we each went away with some little jobs before we finalize it.

Not all of the required data had been collected to date. However, Meredith was able to report on the student's progress using partially completed assessments and informal observations made by at least one of the PPP team members. She stated that the student had progressed with all of her goals. The fact that not all of the required data was collected by the meeting date did not seem to affect Meredith's opinion of the meeting. Factors that aided in making the meeting an excellent one included: open communication; and clear role and responsibility delegation. To promote the PPP team's collaborative efforts, Meredith provided her team members with a visual aide. She explained her technique: "I had the PPP on the computer screen while we were going through it and I was typing what they were saying and they could see what I was typing and what were we saying." She also mentioned that she provided a hard copy of the PPP to each PPP team member.

It was during the second interview that I was made aware of the fact that Meredith wrote the three goals intended for the rubric outcome sampling as SMART goals. The other PPP goals

were not written in the SMART goal format. When asked why the other goals were not written in the format required by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Meredith explained to the researcher that the “Rubrics were for the SMART goals.” This statement indicated that she believed that there were to be enough SMART goals for each of the three rubrics required for the three PPPs selected by the case manager. Meredith spoke of this topic in a matter of fact manner and did not seem aware of the 2008 Funding Grant requirements.

*Meredith’s Third Interview.* Meredith’s third interview occurred approximately one week after the PPP meeting had taken place and the PPP had been written. She began by explaining that, in her school, the responsibility of the review and completion of the outcome rubric sampling could lie with the regular classroom teacher, the EA, or Meredith. The individuals who were responsible for a particular SMART goal would be responsible for the related rubric. However, the related data would not necessarily be collected by that particular individual. Responsibility of data collection would be determined by, what Meredith referred to as, the *who does what best system*. She explained, because of her training as a special education teacher, she was best suited for administering formal assessments. Whereas the regular classroom teacher and EA were most suited for informal assessment and completing observations.

The potential results for the rubric document would be reviewed by the PPP team during the PPP meeting. In the case of this particular child’s PPP, the EA and teacher were responsible for completing the three rubrics. During the summer PPP meeting, the PPP team decided to revisit the student’s progress with each of the goals by “...double check[ing] on some of them.” This meant that some of the data would be reviewed and more data would be collected. The individual responsible for that rubric would then be responsible for ensuring that the data was

collected and reviewed a second time. Meredith would learn of the final results for the rubric through informal conversations with the regular classroom teacher and EA. The last step of the PPP process would involve Meredith copying the results of the rubrics onto the electronic version of the rubric document, and sending them electronically to her supervisor by a deadline assigned by the school division.

Words that Meredith used to describe the rubric process, as experienced by the PPP team, were *competent* and *adequate*. I pointed out that she described the rubric process in quite a different fashion from how she described the summer PPP meeting as *excellent*. She explained she preferred the creative atmosphere that the PPP process fostered, whereas the completion and review of the rubric was a very concrete sequential process. She continued by stating:

...in a PPP you have to think up the goal. Um, decide how you are going to achieve them. Where's the rubric, the goals are thought up already...which is part of the creative process. Then it's just a matter of step by step assessment and recording and observations.

When asked by the researcher, if she considered the rubric process as a collaborative process she replied:

Um, the beginning of the rubric process [the design of the SMART goal], yes collaborative... [the next portion of the rubric process is also collaborative] because I had to clarify the current level of functioning and then say *Okay, how about if we had this number here and this number here? How about those kind of steps?* Then they'll say *Well, no, that's too easy. She can already do that, so let's do that kind of step.* So, that's very collaborative. Um, and then the end point [the completion of the hard copy of the rubric document], not collaborative once they had their role to do. They just went out and did it.

Another common theme during all three of Meredith's interviews was open communication. Meredith presented a perspective on open communication that she had not in the previous interviews; she contributed the team members' assertive natures as being conducive to open communication. She explained that the assertive nature of each of the team members

enabled them to feel comfortable with expressing their individual opinions, making eye contact with one another, and asking questions for clarification.

Meredith used the third interview as an opportunity to reiterate her view of the rubric outcome sampling being a time consuming process. She did paraphrase a previous comment when she stated “Uh, it [the rubric outcome sampling] does quantify [the results of PPP related assessments],” but then continued by stating

Um, but they are pains in the butt. You know it’s kind of time consuming; it’s one more thing to add to the PPP which is time consuming and teachers don’t always use them. They tend to do what they do whether the PPP says it or not. I think and I’ve heard lots of others resource teachers say that. Um, in this case I think we chose good goals for this [student] that were also being done as part of what they do. And so, it was a good thing to quantify them, but it doesn’t mean that I have to like it. [Meredith chuckles.]

Meredith felt that it would be possible to achieve that level of accountability without completing the rubrics outcome sampling:

As long, as we have the SMART goals and know that we have to use SMART as part of the PPP, um, we are going to do this. This is just, this is assessment that Sask. Ed. needs to have for funding purposes. So it’s not necessarily for the best needs of the child; it’s in the best needs of budget. Which may, indirectly, be in the best needs of the child too. I don’t understand all of the ins and outs of what Sask. Ed. has to do.

When asked what she thought was the purpose of the rubric outcome sampling, Meredith responded by stating it was to receive funding from the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education.

The researcher asked how the rubric outcome sampling was related to funding and Meredith responded by saying, “Because they have to be...we have to be accountable to them [the Special Education Department of the school division] who also have to be accountable to get their money and accountability is quantifying children’s progress as opposed to saying *Oh, yeah, we really improved this year.*” Meredith stressed the importance of meeting the Ministry’s requirements and warned the researcher of possible consequences: “Um, I’ve heard of some

people whose PPPs were not done correctly lost their funding.” Meredith also expressed that she felt there was pressure from the school division office to meet the Ministry requirements:

I know my supervisor, this is a big stressor for her because, um, because the buck stops at her and they actually give her a grade and a percentage of all of the PPPs that we hand in; they go through a sampling and say *Well, in this regard you score 86% and this regard you score 75% and she doesn't like it when we score any lower than 90% because she doesn't feel we are doing the best we could be doing and improvement needs to be made.* So, I think she's pretty competitive and goal oriented.

While speaking of this topic Meredith expressed no ill will towards the Ministry or the school division; she was providing her statements simply as an explanation for the reasons for meeting Ministry requirements.

***Review of the Related PPP.*** During the review of the related PPP, I had the opportunity to confirm what I had learned during Meredith's interviews. She and her team had designed, written, and reviewed the progress of three SMART goals in total. The three SMART goals included all of the components required by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education. The PPP listed the regular classroom teacher, the classroom teacher, and the EA as the planning team. Meredith and her fellow team members were able to meet the Ministry's PPP requirements. However, the team was not able to follow the guidelines that pertain to: (1) the presence of an administrative team member and parent or guardian being present at the PPP meeting; (2) writing PPP goals in the SMART goal format; and (3) writing short term objectives to accompany each long term goal (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education 2008a). The reasons for the team's inability to follow those guidelines would include the personal choices of others and themselves.

***Review of the Related Rubric Outcome Sampling.*** All requirements of the rubric outcome sampling were met by Meredith and her fellow PPP team members. The general information provided on the rubric document corresponded with that provided on the PPP

document. All required information was present. The format in which the baseline comments were identical to the SMART goals present in the PPP.

### ***Nicole***

Nicole has been teaching for 30 years; approximately 15 years as a regular classroom teacher and 15 years as a resource room teacher. Her current teaching assignment is resource room teacher and acting vice principal in a school of approximately 200 students in an urban middle class community. She is the case manager for 12 PPPs. Nicole explained that the design of the SMART goals and the writing of the PPPs were her responsibility at her school. For this case study Nicole chose to focus on a male student in grade seven who had been diagnosed with autism. Nicole had worked with this particular student for "... a number of years" and also referred often to the professional relationship she and her colleagues had developed with the child's mother.

***Nicole's First Interview.*** She selected three SMART goals to discuss during our three interviews. The first two that she chose to discuss were from the *Independence/Problem Solving/Work Habits* domain. The first goal focused on the child keeping his hands to himself and not touching others. The second one centered on being able to follow the classroom schedule, detailed on the chalkboard, without one-on-one support by a supervising adult. The third SMART goal fell under the safety domain and consisted of the child being able to verbally identify the dangers of fire. During our conversation Nicole also referred to another SMART goal closely related to the third goal, being able to verbally identify the dangers of electricity. Nicole explained that she chose to focus on those three particular goals because "In my view independence, safety, and work habits are what going to help him be successful in life."

When asked if she felt if the student had progressed with the first goal, she responded by stating “Um, he has made significant gains, and having worked with him for a number of years, I can tell you that this is an ongoing thing with him. So, it’s something that we have had to monitor over the years.” Nicole had a similar response when asked whether she believed the child had experienced any progress with the last two goals. Nicole referred to the student’s diagnosis and explained that it is common for individuals diagnosed with autism to achieve goals associated with those domains. She stated, “Um, because the child...of the child’s diagnosis... it is very difficult for him to move beyond himself, in that where he is functioning in his own mind is where he stays.”

Nicole explained that she was confident that her fellow PPP team members would agree with her opinion on the student’s progress, because she based her answers on observations, anecdotal records, and assessment. During the conversation I learned that even though Nicole often incorporates assessment in the data collection process, anecdotal records and observations were the two strategies used for the three goals discussed during her interviews. She described the observations that she made:

They’re impromptu observations. Um, anytime that I have anything called *prep time* or any time that I am moving between classrooms I will peek into any given classrooms; I have that relationship and permission of the teachers that I can sit down at any given time.

Nicole often made reference to the professional relationships she shared with her colleagues, indicating that the teacher and EA were often involved in making informal observations and maintaining anecdotal records. However, these professional interactions could be difficult to maintain or initiate, especially in the context of the PPP meeting: “We have difficulty having EAs in attendance if they [the PPP meetings] are not during work hours ...because if an EA is in attendance up to or above their work hours they need to be paid or given time in lieu and most

schools do not have a lot of flexibility in that area.” Nicole also mentioned the difficulty of facilitating interagency collaboration:

Um, I find [it] very challenging to bring outside agencies to the table. As much as I know that it is mandated by the provincial government, the Ministry of Education, that outside agencies having... let’s say, a physio or OT or SLP that is hired by the parents to do private sessions for the child and the parent is in the position to pay the specialist to be at the meetings that is much more likely to happen. But, if we, ourselves, ask for the occupational therapist to consult, um, that would mean that we would have to pay them and then that money actually means that that person would not then spend time---would not possibly spend time with students and I am not prepared to do that for a PPP.

As a result of wanting her student to receive the services he required, Nicole chose an option which would negatively impact the collaborative process due to the absence of the outside agencies.

Nicole also explained that the involvement of parents also requires a flexible approach: “Um, for this student it will be, uh, the mom and/or dad, it’s always the mom [who attends the PPP meetings]. I’ve never had just the dad, but the dad is often present.” She explained that this flexibility not only pertained to who would be attending the PPP meeting, but also how and when each individual would participate in the meeting. Nicole made an exception, to her flexible view of participation, in the case of the conversation about the goal pertaining to fire safety. She allowed the parents to have the largest role in this goal. She explained, during certain times in the conversation, that amount of participation that each team member was allowed was non-negotiable. She stated, “I think that depending on the goal you need to look at the person who is working the most often with the child during those situations. So, due to, um, that contact with the child, that may increase that person’s weight in terms of answering a question.” She continued by stating:

I think that the way the PPP is, um, laid out some of it is very much school centered and I would term that in the academic areas and see, as the professionals in that area, um, that the parents----I

see the parents' role as listening and trying to understand and asking clarification questions and would not expect or encourage or perhaps accept academic goals outlined by the parent.

When asked whether she viewed the different levels and types of expertise present with the various individuals who are attending the meetings as beneficial or as a hindrance, Nicole explained that she saw that situation as being enriching: "I think, as we have, speech and language paths, we have OTs, we have counsellors, um, parents, EAs, administrators... whatever the case maybe, um, people from Child and Youth, a psychiatrist present... they all have different views so that we can, hopefully, put the pieces together... much like a puzzle... and with all of that information then decide what's important and what is feasible for a school to do."

Nicole was forthright with her opinions on how the PPP process facilitates interaction between home and school:

Um, I do not feel that it [the PPP] does not necessary facilitate or stands in the way of that progress [of a developing a collaborative relationship] or that interaction. I think that where the Personal Program Plan steps in terms of facilitating that interaction between others is that those who are not involving the parents anyway. Anyone who sees the school functioning in isolation would not feel the need to reach out. Anyone who recognizes that a child's school life is only part of their school life recognizes they need to reach out and, perhaps, as I am chatting I am thinking that, perhaps, this too, that we recognize that there are times when there are parents who see the school as a threatening and intimidating place to be. So, if they have to come to formalized meetings, in some way, that may be frightening and, in other ways, it might be helpful to them to realize that we are asking them questions and inviting them. We need them in this process and so that might---I am at a lost for the word right now, but it might be---empowering for them too.

These comments were reminiscent of other comments Nicole had made about the importance of the relationship between family and school.

When asked to comment on the impact of the Ministry's change of PPP requirements, Nicole explained her views on the topic:

Um, I think that, uh, it's---I understand why these goal [the introduction of the SMART goals and the introduction of the rubric outcome sampling] changes have been made. I think it is important that we're accountable to the Ministry; accountable to the parents; accountable to the child; and accountable to each other. Um, I think it's just something that can be challenging

because in any child's life... I will go back to the road is not always smooth... if there's a family break-up; if there's a change in meds; if there is a new diagnosis---there is all sorts of things that can impede a child's progress and then you go back and you score the SMART goals and you feel that you did not do very well and yet, you can't---there's not necessarily a place to say "Yeah, but..." and is there a place for *but*s in this?

Nicole's frustrations with the changes to the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education's PPP requirements would be reiterated in following interviews.

*Nicole's Second Interview.* During our second interview, which occurred approximately 24 hours after the PPP meeting had concluded, Nicole was very positive about that particular meeting. Descriptive phrases that she used to describe the final PPP meeting of the academic year were "... cooperative and [a] good team building experience." She appeared to be very observant of her fellow team members, noting their relaxed facial expressions and body language, as well as noting that the team members were comfortably interrupting the conversation to clarify their understanding and/or contributing to the conversation. The positive nature of the meeting, in Nicole's opinion, was due to the previous efforts of the family. These efforts included the mother being involved with the school and initiating numerous informal conversations between her and the various PPP team members, EA, and/or resource room teacher. Nicole also contributed a great deal of responsibility for the meeting's success to the student's teacher by skillfully adapting classroom activities and nurturing an inclusive learning environment in order to promote a successful year for the student. Nicole viewed the June meeting as a way to bring *things to closure*, noting that "...as much as it [the summer PPP meeting] is meant to bring things to closure, it is awfully hard to not to look into next year and where we need to go with that."

A topic that Nicole mentioned on numerous occasions during the interview was the importance of informal conversations between the various PPP team members that had occurred

prior to the summer PPP meeting. I asked how Nicole incorporated the responsibilities of a resource room teacher, observations, and informal conversations into one school day. Nicole replied, “By the seat of your pants. That’s what you do. You are constantly moving. Um, but you are constantly making yourself available because that’s your job.” Another reason for the success of the PPP meeting, according to Nicole, was the fact that every team member had an equal opportunity to contribute to the design of the Fall PPP; referring to the PPP as a *team project*. Nicole explained, “Again, as much as I want to reiterate what I said in the first meeting I do believe that the teachers set the goals for the academics, but the parents always has a role to play.”

Nicole also commented on the guidelines that had been newly implemented for the school division that employs her:

It’s been stated at the last resource room teacher’s meeting that they’re feeling that the June PPP meeting could/should also be the September PPP meeting and, in as much, historically, like I said, the June PPP automatically leans to September I think if it was kind of a stated expectation where you could have what you think could be next year’s teacher because we know that staff personnel is constantly changing, but if we could have that kind of meeting to bring this to closure and look at next year with the curriculum and where you are going and this child is in grade eight so we’ve already planned on where he’ll be going for high school. So, if we can look at more the skills needed for that setting I think that it would make for a much more intense meeting, whereas I find the June PPP meetings fairly quick and short because we’re just looking at how—how it worked what came in---you know, how were our goals—what we do need to change.

This cautionary comment led to the discussion of concerns that Nicole held on other aspects of the PPP process.

Nicole was the most unsure of herself when discussing the progress of the student. She showed disappointment about the level of progress that child achieved for each of the three goals.

Yes. I am afraid to say yes and no. He’s done a marvelous job at keeping his hands to himself in terms of the Safety/Work Habits/ Independence sort of goal. He’s no more hands on than any

other student at grade seven. Uh, the thing that surfaced the most for me was the issue of fire. Um, again, we know with a child with this diagnosis as I said before it is really hard them to internalize and see outward. Um, as much as he is very good at stating the dangers of fire and electricity he continues to demonstrate very unsafe behaviors in the home.

I would later learn that I had misinterpreted the feelings expressed by Nicole when she explained to me her regret of not being able to base the PPP goals on the child's Educational Psychologist's assessment summary. Despite her positive view about the PPP meeting, Nicole had conflicting feelings about the Educational Psychologist's summary of assessment that had been received by the PPP team approximately two months before the summer PPP meeting. She commented she had felt the goals, which were written for the Fall PPP, were appropriate for that particular student at that time. However, she felt that "...as much as the goals were written in September or October, the Ed. Psych. assessment came later and therefore...some of where we were going was really void." This concern over the assessment and PPP goals would prove to be an important concern for Nicole during her third interview.

*Nicole's Third Interview.* Nicole's third interview began on a very interesting note for me; I learned that the PPP team had no plans to prepare an actual rubrics document for the PPP that Nicole had decided to focus upon for this study. The researcher decided to continue with the research because of the strategy the PPP team implemented to discuss the progress with the student. During the interview and the related study of the PPP document, the researcher learned that Nicole and her PPP team designed a SMART goal and decided upon assessment strategies that enabled them to gain data, assign a numeric value to the level of progress achieved by the child, and provide for that numeric value (i.e., *as expected, above expected, etc.*). The process was very similar to the design of an actual rubric document, as described by all three participants in a general terms, with the one exception that the actual descriptors had not been designed prior to the PPP meeting.

The PPP team members for the summer PPP included: the classroom teacher; the parents; and Nicole, acting as case manager and representative of the administrative team. The PPP team was unable to meet during a time that would work with the EA's schedule and she could not attend. Nicole explained that during the PPP meeting, the team was able to: discuss the student's progress in an anecdotal fashion; discuss the collected data; and collectively write a remark that included numeric values and descriptors. This PPP team had a unique approach to the design of the PPP goals from any of the other PPP teams discussed for this case study. Selection of the goals occurred during the PPP team meeting; while the design and writing of each SMART goal was completed by Nicole.

During the third interview, Nicole shared her mixed feelings about this particular meeting; she described it as a:

...combination of disappointment and looking forward. Um, disappointment because I believe that some of the goals we had set in September, as much as they made sense back then, once the child had an Ed. Psych assessment we realized how much the PPP would have to change. So as much as this one had to be brought to closure it gave me something to look forward to because we have more information in terms of how this child learns. Also, because this child is going into grade 8 we are looking at where we are headed and we have started discussion this year in terms of his high school placement.

She was quick to explain that her feelings of disappointment were not due to the child's level of progress, but because of the recent arrival of the educational psychologist's assessment summary. Nicole explained that even though she was confident that the goals designed by the PPP team in September were beneficial to the child's development, she was disappointed to learn that there were goals that the educational psychologist felt were better suited to his needs.

Nicole attributed the teacher's teaching skills and his mother's knowledge of her child's disability to the reason why she was confident that none of the PPP team members would disagree with her opinion to how much the child progressed with the PPP goals. She also noted

those two factors, the parent's awareness of her child's disability and the teacher's ability to modify a school activity, with being very strong promoters of the collaborative effort. Nicole also credited the effectiveness of the fall PPP promoting the collaborative process associated with the summer PPP meeting. Nicole explained that the open communication that occurred during the fall PPP, as well as the informal conversations that occurred during the school year, ensured that the PPP team would be able to contribute to the collaborative process.

Nicole's only regret for the PPP meeting was that the EA was not able to attend due to her work schedule and the unavailability of time in lieu. She explained that the school team's regular practice of communicating with one another assisted with reducing the negative impact of the EA's absence. Nicole also believed that the teacher and EA's routine of having the teacher plan for the student and the EA reporting, on a daily basis, to the teacher on the child's progress with those teacher-planned activities.

When asked to comment on her opinion of the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education's requirement for outcome rubric sampling, Nicole replied that she did not see it as a necessary process. She continued by stating "My PPPs are all written with SMART goals; they are measured throughout the year, we judge them at the end of the year. I'm not sure that I need to submit a rubric. I think that the way that the PPPs are going with the short term and long term goals, as well as writing everything up as SMART goals. I think that the rubric may be redundant." Nicole explained that the major difference between one of her PPPs and a rubric document is that the PPP includes an explanation that accompanies the numeric value and descriptor of the student's progress for a particular goal. Another concern that Nicole has of the rubric outcome sampling document is its readability. She explained, "I am very concerned about how I want anyone who is reading it, whether it be a lay person or a professional, knows exactly

what we did or didn't do and where that child is coming from because if the child moves to another location I think it's important that they can pick it up and say *Oh, this is where the child is at; this is what they were looking at.* I don't want there to be any guessing involved." Nicole's voice seemed to take on a reassuring tone when she spoke of the opportunity to provide more explanation in the PPP document.

When asked about how special education has changed since Nicole began to teach, she used an analogy:

I choose to look at how special education has changed as looking at an umbrella and so, if you look at an umbrella it has the supporting of let's say four wires supporting the umbrella; that's the way it would have been at the beginning of my career. If you look at special education as the larger umbrella then you look at learning needs, then you look at behaviour needs, then you look at mental health issues...they all fall under special education. Then each one of those is broken down into smaller parts. So, it's the fine tuning that has occurred over my career; it's not that anything in particular has changed.

Not only did Nicole comment on the changes that have occurred to the field of special education throughout the years, but also to the training of special educators:

Um, I guess that I have many concerns when it comes to special ed.; in terms of training in general to become a special ed. teacher. I think there is more to special ed. than being a master teacher and I think a resource teacher can be a master teacher, but I don't think a master teacher can be a resource teacher. I'm also extremely disappointed that training in, probably, the last 15 or 20 years has moved to textbook instead of actual student contact. When I listen to Ed. Psychs I feel that, um, I got as much training in assessment as they're getting before they come out and to me that is disappointing because I think they need much more hands on and I think resource teachers need much more hands on in terms of assessing real children and planning programs around that assessment, as well as being handed assessments and being able to plan programs around that assessment and seeing where it goes from there.

During her reflection of what it is like to be a resource room teacher in present day, Nicole referred to the resource room teacher as a person who works in isolation, in the sense that there is often only one resource room teacher assigned to each school. She felt that this isolation was a key reason for the different special education teachers interpreting the Saskatchewan Ministry of

Education's requirements differently. She explained her opinion "I think any time that you have more than one person [doing the same job] there is space for interpretation."

Nicole's third interview concluded with her defining collaboration: "Collaboration, to me, means everyone coming to the table with their knowledge of that child, their own personal experience, their own knowledge, whether it be personal or professional, and expertise in their areas and sharing...all in the best interest of the student."

***Review of the Related PPP.*** All of the PPP goals of the reviewed PPP document were written in SMART goal format. The three SMART goals reviewed for this study included all of the components required by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education (2008a). All Ministry requirements and guidelines were followed, except for the inclusion of short term objectives accompanying the long term goals (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education 2008a). Please note that Nicole was unable to provide any related rubric outcome sampling. She explained that she did not realize she had to provide accompanying rubric documents for this study. When I referred to the case study participant consent form's reference to this requirement, she acknowledged that she may have remembered something of the matter.

### ***Kate***

Kate has been teaching in special education for 11 years; approximately nine years as a resource room teacher. Her current teaching assignment is resource room teacher and vice principal in an urban middle class school of approximately 500 students. She is the case manager for eight PPPs. Kate is responsible for editing of the teacher designed SMART goals and written PPPs. Kate decided to focus on a grade seven female student who had been diagnosed with a learning disability in May, 2009 and, because of the parents' work schedules, the school's staff

was required to meet once without the parents to plan and write the PPP and once with the parents to discuss the document designed by the staff.

*Kate's First Interview.* Kate had chosen to focus upon two goals from the *Academics* domain and one from the domain entitled *Other* for this case study. The first goal was to increase reading fluency and rate; the second was for the student to improve her ability to write an appropriately structured paragraph; and the third goal focused upon the student wearing clean clothes to school. Kate provided a unique reason for the PPP team's choice of goals; the goals were designed based on assessment. The data collection process included the *Fountas and Pinnel, Ekwall/Shanker Reading Inventory, Grey Oral Reading Test, Test of Written Language*, data sheets, an informal sight word assessment, classroom writing continuum and an informal reading inventory were administered by either the resource room teacher, student, EA, or one of the two regular classroom teachers who job share that particular teaching assignment. Throughout the interview Kate spoke confidently of the progress the child had made during the school year and felt that her PPP team members would agree with her. She attributed this confidence to her answers being based on the collected data and the fact that she promoted a sense of ownership over the process for the school staff and family.

Kate referred to the before mentioned assessments, inventories and classroom writing continuum when asked whether the student had experienced progress for either of the academic goals. She explained that she had administered the *Grey Oral Reading Test*, the *Test of Written Language*, an informal sight word assessment, and an informal reading inventory, while the teachers administered the *Fountas and Pinnel*. Kate reported that all of the collected data supported Kate's claim that the student had progress with both of the academic skills.

In her comments about the student's progress with the goal that fell under the *Other* domain, Kate made reference to the data sheets that were designed by the classroom teachers and completed by the EA. She explained that informal conversations between staff members about the child's lack of hygiene prompted the PPP team to plan a goal, teaching strategies, and a data collection strategy which was then recorded in the spring edition of the PPP. Kate explained that even though the collected data indicated the child had experienced progress with that particular goal, the PPP team was challenged with separating the idea of appropriate school attire and the student's right for self expression:

Um, some of the other things, in just presentation, are just a little more challenging because, I think, we are struggling with the idea that you have to fit within a certain...a certain look...or is it okay?---because she sort of has wild, crazy um, naturally curly hair and doesn't wear makeup and pretty well all of---most of our girls do so, are we putting different societal expectations on her or is it okay as long as she is clean and so, I think, that's kind of where we are...as long as she looks clean and presentable. I think that's where...but we did have that conversation as a team, so... [Kate's voice drifts off and she shrugs her shoulders to indicate that she is done speaking.]

Kate and her PPP team members struggled with approaching the discussion of the student's progress with this particular goal in an objective manner. Their own individual social expectations combined with what they perceived to be as the expectations of the student's peers impacted the team's ability to agree on the child's level of progress.

She mentioned the various knowledge bases and/or amount of experience that can exist between parents and teachers, as well as within a staff, as another possible barrier. Various knowledge bases and/or amount of experience can place a disproportionate amount of responsibility on one team member. She provided an example within the context of a SMART goal: "I don't think, unless the training for the SMART goals has occurred at the school level, we know that it hasn't occurred at the system or administrative level, or at the university level for general education teachers. So, I think that's why, um, um, a lot of the weight falls for the

SMART goals to be written correctly upon the resource teacher's shoulders." She followed this statement by explaining her view that commencement and continuation of funding relied heavily on the resource room teacher's efforts and skills.

Kate also referred to varying skill sets and knowledge bases as possible barriers to communication between parents/guardians and the variety of professionals that may provide services for their child. She explained that this barrier could also interfere with communication between professionals. She referred to the resource room teacher's unique knowledge base and skill set as being the best solution for that particular problem. She explained that resource room teachers are often expected to interpret the assessment summaries of educational psychologists and speech and language pathologists for parents and professionals, such as regular classroom teachers, and to ensure that the recommendations stated in the summary were carried out.

She continued by stating that the difference of knowledge base and skill sets between regular classroom teacher and resource room teacher could also attribute to a difference in opinions on various situations. She shared a scenario involving a child, unrelated to the PPP in discussion, whose teacher was interpreting her student's behaviour as inattentive and rebellious. Kate interpreted the child's behaviour as a symptom of a learning challenge. Such a disagreement could not only have a negative effect upon the problem solving process, but also upon the working relationship between the professionals involved.

Varying personalities within a staff were also listed as a possible collaboration barrier. Specifically, that personality differences and difference in opinion between EAs and teachers can impede the collaborative effort. She explained that the balance of power in a relationship between these two colleagues was a fragile and important factor in the collaborative process. Kate stressed the importance of appropriate role delegation and role clarity of teacher and EA.

For example, the teacher being responsible for instruction while the EA provides support for the child's learning process. Kate held the teacher and resource room teacher mutually responsible for the design of a student's program. She expressed concern that EAs were occasionally and inappropriately assigned to locating resources. This inappropriately delegated responsibility could influence the effectiveness of the teaching strategy selected by the PPP team, and as a result negatively impact the collaborative effort.

A lack of time was also listed as a possible barrier for collaboration. Kate provided a detailed explanation for why it can be challenging for PPP team members to gather for informal conversations:

[It can be] challenging just because there are just so many impeding priorities that...so, if we look at the bigger part of the picture I think the Ministry places the division and the division, of course, has its priorities, and then the school has its business that it has to look after at its own level...and then being in a large school and then just the complex nature of...I don't know if it would matter because I think just being a resource room teacher your case load is demanding and then being a vice principal is demanding, so I usually have to e-mail or in passing we try to set up a meeting, and it's usually at a lunch or, sometimes its informal [meaning a casual unplanned conversation that happened in passing], but usually it's at lunch or before or after school that we meet... or on the teacher's prep if it works out...if it works out. I don't think I should say it because I am a vice principal; that I have the luxury to [meet other teachers during their prep time]...that a regular resource room teacher does not have that luxury during their prep time.

Kate's description of the hierarchy of priorities highlighted, for the researcher, the numerous expectations placed upon a school's staff that can foster an overly demanding schedule and high pressure environment.

Kate stated that some resource room teachers lack special education certification which could act as a barrier to the collaborative efforts of a PPP team. She related an individual's special education certification with his/her ability to facilitate the collaborative process. She commented on the province's reaction to the lack of certified special education teachers: "I believe the division and the ministry really truly wants to hire people who are qualified, but I

know that we are not always able to put people in [the position of resource room teacher] who are qualified and so I know, from being at the last Ministry meeting, I heard an outcry from across the part of the province that was there for this that, um, and that we need to do a better job starting at the university level.” She felt that a resource room teacher required, at minimum, the amount of special education courses and credits required by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education in order to fulfill their responsibilities in an efficient and effective manner. She also stated that many of the communication challenges that regular classroom teachers experience with their special education colleagues could be reconciled with regular classroom teachers receiving more training in special education related topics at the university level.

Kate has experienced the impact of what she perceives to be inadequate university training; the frustration expressed by her colleagues about the challenges they experienced with designing SMART goals led her to seek her principal’s support to initiate training on the topic within their school. She has taken on the responsibility to train her colleagues on the design of SMART goals. Teaching strategies that she has utilized include: inservices, templates, exemplars, and many informal conversations. Within this particular strategy, Kate perceived a possible lack of administrative support and a resource teacher’s public speaking skills being potential barriers at the school level. To avoid any of these possible barriers, Kate believed the only appropriate solution for this perceived lack of university training would be for the division to provide workshops for regular classroom teachers. The only challenge of implementing division-wide training on SMART goals, that Kate could predict, would be travel costs for rural school divisions. However, she saw her solution being one that could easily be used by an urban school division.

Another challenge that Kate saw as interfering with a regular classroom teacher's acquisition of goal writing skills was the difficulty that many teachers have with navigating through the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education's website. The Ministry does have information on the PPP, the writing of SMART goals, and the design of related rubric outcome sampling, but as Kate pointed out, not all visitors to the site would think to look to the Children's Services section of the website for the information. She also mentioned that she felt the amount of information on the topic could be increased, as well as include more examples with explicit instruction. Kate felt that a possible solution to this dilemma could be the amalgamation of curriculum related committees and resources with special education related committees and resources. This amalgamation of the two departments, at the Ministry level, could eliminate the challenges that teachers have with locating the information. As well, it could foster an increase of knowledge for regular classroom teachers on special education related topics at the school level.

***Kate's Second Interview.*** Kate described the PPP team's first meeting as a gathering that *went well*. Kate listed successes such as having the opportunity to meet the parents for the first time and beginning the transition plans for the student's high school career. Kate explained that due to professional obligations, the student's parents found it difficult to meet with the school's staff. Therefore, the PPP team had to meet with the parents after the division's deadline had passed. Kate, the student's classroom teachers, and EA met prior to the parent meeting. The team designed the PPP and sent in the document to the division office without parental signatures. Despite the challenges of finding a time to meet with the parents, Kate was positive about the results of the parent meeting. Kate and her colleagues were able to take advantage of the parents' presence by: planning for another educational psychology assessment to occur in the following

academic year; arranging for a Fall multi-approach planning session (MAPS); and discussing any assistive technology that may benefit the student. Kate was then asked if she could change any part of the meeting in order to improve its effectiveness, what would it be. Kate confidently answered that there was not. She attributed this confidence to the data collected by the PPP team and the sense of ownership over the collaborative process that each team member possessed.

Kate labeled several factors as promoters of collaboration for this particular PPP process, including the student's presence at the PPP meeting. She explained she felt it important that the child felt ownership of her own learning. Other promoters of collaboration that were listed by Kate were: the PPP team consisted of a small group which promoted a sense of comfort amongst team members, especially for the student; a positive relationship between resource room teacher and the relevant regular classroom teachers; a positive relationship between the student and her teachers; and a positive relationship between the student and her teachers. Kate concluded her discussion of this topic by warning other resource room teachers to ask the student's teachers and parents of their opinion on the possible invitation. In addition, special education teachers need to consider the child's maturity level, cognitive ability, emotional well being, and relationship that he/she shares with his/her parents and teachers. Other actions that Kate took to promote the effectiveness of the PPP team's collaborative efforts were to provide everyone with a copy of the Personal Program Plan. She also sent a copy of the PPP home for the family to read and use to prepare for the meeting since they had not attended the initial PPP meeting.

During her second interview Kate mentioned that family characteristics can challenge the collaborative nature of the PPP meeting. Characteristics such as: family values that differ from that of the school staff, the parent's comfort level with associating with the school staff, and language barriers can impede the efforts of the PPP team. Kate explained she prefers to discuss

the PPP with the parents of a student with Intensive Supports during a meeting so she is aware of their understanding of the document. Kate explained that the value the parents place on the PPP process could be a barrier. When the PPP is sent home for the parents to read and sign without attending a meeting, there is a possibility that the parents will not take the time to contemplate the goals, strategies and resources that will impact their child's learning. Due to the unique perspective that they have of their child, parental involvement can enrich the PPP process and their absence can be detrimental to the efforts of the PPP team. Kate also listed how comfortable the parents with the school staff as a possible factor that could act as a barrier to collaboration. This discomfort could negatively impact on the quality of communication during a PPP meeting. Closely related to this concept was how culture and English spoken as a second language could impede the PPP process.

During her second interview, Kate expanded on the concept, of how different knowledge bases and skill sets can act as a barrier for the collaborative process, that she mentioned during her first interview. She explained a person's will to learn about a child's diagnosis and beneficial teaching strategies can contribute to the difference of knowledge bases. Several factors were listed as possible reasons for a person choosing not to learn more on a certain topic: class size; classroom caseloads; an individual's personality; a person's drive; a sense that it is the resource room teacher's responsibility to possess such knowledge; other factors related to their personal lives; and whether a teacher taught in the primary grades or middle year grades. This last point was added because Kate believed that teachers who taught in the primary grades tended to be more receptive to the planning and implementation of the PPP.

When speaking of SMART in a general fashion, Kate was very positive. She was unique from the other participants in this study in the sense that she received her training in the United

States of America. She explained that her initial training as a special education teacher involved the writing of SMART goals. She commented on how, as a resource room teacher new to the school division, it was difficult to adjust to reading PPPs written by other resource room teachers because they were written in a more anecdotal style. She attributed the Ministry of Education's *Funding Grant* requirements to promoting a PPP which was more of a working document and in line with a phrase that is often used to describe the PPP: "... a living, breathing document."

Kate continued her monologue on the PPP by relating it to the larger picture. She appeared to be proud as she described her school division as one that had embraced the Response to Interventions model as opposed to maintaining the medical model. She viewed the changes that the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education made to the requirements of funding as beneficial to students. Kate described how, in the past, PPP teams would continue to design PPPs for students who no longer required funding. The reason for this was that an EA to provide assistance to a child who could not meet the former requirements of Saskatchewan Learning for funding. She saw this act as a moral and ethical dilemma that could end with an individual carrying an undeserved label with him/herself for the rest of his/her life.

***Kate's Third Interview.*** Similar to Nicole's third interview, Kate's last interview began with a surprising revelation for me; I learned that the PPP team had no plans to prepare an actual rubrics document for the PPP Kate had decided to focus upon for this study. I decided to continue with the research because of the strategy the PPP team implemented to discuss the progress with the student. During the interview and the related study of the PPP document, I learned that Kate and her PPP team had reported the progress of each goal in a particular manner. Each progress report had been assigned a numeric value to the level of progress achieved by the child, and provided a descriptor for that numeric value (i.e., *as expected, above expected, etc.*).

The process was very similar to the design of an actual rubric document, as described by all three participants in general terms, with the one exception that the five different levels of numeric values and descriptors had not been designed prior to the PPP meeting.

Kate explained that the individuals who attended the June PPP meeting were those who had participated in the collection of the anecdotal information, made observations, completed data sheets, and/or administered the assessments. The individuals in attendance of the meeting which focused on the student's progress included: the two classroom teachers, the resource room teacher, the student, and the student's parents. The student's EA was able to attend the first meeting which consisted of relevant staff personnel, but could not attend the meeting which would include the family because of her work schedule and the unavailability of time in lieu.

Kate described working with two teachers that job share as a possible barrier. She explained it can be difficult to schedule a meeting for two individuals that work at different times. Also, Kate warned me of the necessity to delegate, in specific terms, who would be responsible for collecting what data. She explained that the two *Academic* goals had been specifically delegated to one of the teachers. The data collection for the goal involving the student's hygiene had been originally delegated to both of the regular classroom teachers. Kate shared that the data collection process was not equally shared and one of the teachers claimed more responsibility for the data than the other.

Kate provided a brief description of the collaborative process that was involved in this particular PPP process. The entire process of SMART goal design, implementation, data collection, and progress review occurred within two months. Kate saw her ability to meet and work with the two regular classroom teachers as being central to the student having a strong Personal Program Plan. The first step for Kate was to develop a relationship with the teachers

which she felt was built on trust. Secondly, Kate helped the teachers to: expand their knowledge on learning disabilities; learn more about teaching strategies; and modify the student's learning environment to ensure optimal learning. Kate felt this process was going smoothly until, as a Vice Principal, she had the opportunity to proofread the student's report card. On that day, Kate realized the classroom teacher, responsible for instructing mathematics in that classroom, had not assigned the child a percentage or provided any comments. The teacher did not realize a child who was benefitting from the adaptive dimension required marks on her report card. Kate was able to arrange a time to meet with the teacher where she provided the teacher with a list of concerns and discussed possible strategies that the teacher could use to avoid that situation in the future.

During her third interview, Kate reiterated her concern that she was unable to help her regular classroom teaching colleagues to fully understand how to program, instruct, and assess a child with Intensive Supports. She reviewed the strategies she had already implemented in attempt to achieve this goal: inservices, handouts, templates, and exemplars. She expressed frustration over the sheer amount of responsibility involved with coordinating PPP teams that can include teachers, support staff, and pupil services personnel.

Kate described the rubric outcome sampling as a duplication of the Personal Program Plan. She explained, "I don't think it [the rubric process] assists parents anymore than the PPP in understanding." She felt that the rubric outcome sampling is a strategy for the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education to collect data. Kate did not express any discontent with the process; she did not perceive it as contributing to the collaborative process. Kate noted that she viewed the rubric as "...another piece of paperwork.

Kate used her last interview as an opportunity to stress a concern she had about the state of special education in Saskatchewan:

...as long as we continue to have special education on a different part of the web space that is out there with the ministry; as long as we continue to have special education and curriculum meeting and discussing, it's going to affect how the Personal Program is viewed and seen by general education teachers and how ownership is taken for that; as long as the University continues to just have one class that focuses on exceptionalities and I know that there are competing priorities, but I think integration of diversity and how you support diversity in the classroom has to be an element in the classes that university students are taking, um, then we are going to work in a silo and I think that is how special ed. works....in a silo. I think it's come a long way, but I think we have a long, long ways to go when we talk about regular and special education.

Kate felt these challenges could be remedied by having all information pertaining to special education and curriculum at the same location on the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education's website. She also felt a larger focus on special education in the university curriculum could also help to remedy these barriers.

***Review of the Related PPP.*** All of the PPP goals of the reviewed PPP document included all of the components of the SMART goal but did not resemble the SMART goal template provided by the Ministry (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2006a). I interpreted the goals as following the requirements of the Ministry. All Ministry requirements and guidelines were followed, except for the inclusion of short term objectives accompanying the long term goals (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2008a). Please note that Kate was unable to provide any related rubric outcome sampling. She explained she did not realize she had to provide accompanying rubric documents for this study. When I referred to the case study participant consent form's reference to this requirement, like Nicole, she also acknowledged that she may have remembered something of the matter.

## *Summary*

All three resource room teachers spoke openly and bluntly on the PPP process, the rubric process, and barriers of the collaborative process. Numerous themes were identified in the data. Themes that were present in data collected from at least two of the participants will be discussed in this chapter. The themes include: (1) the need to be flexible with parents; (2) resource room teachers have large workloads; (3) concern over EAs not being able to attend PPP meetings; (4) the need for rubrics to be discussed within the context of a PPP meeting; (5) the effect of having different knowledge bases and levels of expertise represented in a PPP team; (6) the use of visual aides during the PPP meeting; and (7) working with the dual role of resource room teacher and vice principal.

Pattern-matching and explanation building were the two analytic techniques that were incorporated into the study. Pattern-matching is used to compare an empirically based pattern with a predicted one in order to detect coinciding patterns (Yin, 1994). If the patterns do coincide then the internal validity of the case study has been strengthened. Explanation-building is a type of complex pattern-matching. The goal of such a technique is to analyze the case study data by building an explanation about the case (Yin, 1994). The next chapter provides a summary of the research, context of the research, limitations of the study, confirmation of the findings, an analysis of the content of the interviews, new findings, the researcher's final reflections, and recommendations for future research.

## **Chapter Five: Discussion**

This descriptive case study included multiple interviews with three different resource room teachers. The duration of the study was five weeks. The study involved three interviews with each participant, my notes from the interviews, and analysis of the PPPs and rubrics. The case study focused on the perceptions and opinions that these three resource room teachers had of the required SMART goals, rubric outcome sampling, and the collaborative effort of Personal Program Planning team.

This chapter provides a summary of the study, its findings, and the advantages and limitations of the research design. The findings of the case study are discussed in terms of the literature. The study concludes with recommendations for future research.

### ***Summary of Findings***

All three resource room teachers spoke openly and bluntly on the PPP process, the rubric process, and barriers of the collaborative process. Numerous themes were identified in the data. Themes that were present in data collected from at least two of the participants will be discussed in this chapter. The themes include: (1) the need to be flexible with parents; (2) resource room teachers have large workloads; (3) concern over EAs not being able to attend PPP meetings; (4) the need for rubrics to be discussed within the context of a PPP meeting; (5) the effect of having different knowledge bases and levels of expertise represented in a PPP team; (6) the use of visual aides during the PPP meeting; and (7) working with the dual role of resource room teacher and vice principal. The next section provides a description of the context of the research.

### ***Context of Research***

This research was an embedded single-case (descriptive) study consisting of three subunits. Each subunit was one resource room teacher who was teaching in a central

Saskatchewan urban school division at the elementary level. This study provided detailed information about the opinions and perspectives that three elementary school resource room teachers had about the changes made to the PPP requirements by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education. Data for this study was collected by conducting multiple interviews and maintaining field notes made during the interviews, as well as analyzing PPP and rubric documents. Common themes from the interviews are discussed in the next section.

### ***Common Themes***

During the multiple interviews that I conducted, numerous themes began to rise from the participants' comments. Themes that were mentioned by at least two participants will be discussed. In the following sections I label each common theme and provide a brief description. The discussion on common themes from the interviews is followed by my own final reflections.

***Collaboration as a Definition and Model.*** The PPP process, as described by each of the three participants was similar to the PPP process described by Saskatchewan Learning (2001). The process includes five phases: setting direction; data collection; the PPP meeting; writing the PPP; and PPP evaluation (Saskatchewan Learning, 2001). Thus far, collaboration had been labelled, by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education as a guideline and not a requirement (Saskatchewan Learning, 1991; 2001; 2005; 2006; Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2008a). Similar to the Ministry, none of the participants spoke of collaboration as a requirement, but their comments indicated a preference for the PPP to be a collaborative process.

Meredith described the first phase of the PPP process as making sure every team member understood what "role they had to do." Dettmer et al. (1993) listed role delegation as a requirement of collaboration. Nicole emphasized the importance of collecting data from a variety of sources. She said "...I think we need to give ourselves permission...to ask for more

information from whoever that may be or is needed from.” Kate’s comments on appropriate attendees for a PPP meeting supported collaboration. She stated:

... generally you should have a resource teacher there, the parents there, I also really think that at a certain age the student should be there. I don’t think that happens enough. So, that the student can take ownership for their own learning and then, specially for when they move onto high school they need to advocate for themselves. So, I think...did I say classroom teachers, the educational assistant and then when and if appropriate, you know it’s not going to happen every time, but school psychologist, SLP, OT you know, it just....any other outside agencies that the child be involved with...social services...you know, Big Brother, Big Sister, anyone who may have valuable input. The administrator should definitely be there as well.

Kate also used a collaborative approach to writing PPPs. She explained that she and the regular classroom teacher cooperatively wrote the SMART goals and rubrics. All three resource room teachers stated that the PPP goals and rubrics should be discussed during the June review PPP meeting with every PPP team member present.

Even though a great variance existed in the literature, there were similarities present amongst the various definitions of collaboration in the literature (Dettmer et al., 1993; Reinhiller, 1999). The majority of the literature on the topic of collaboration stressed that effective collaboration involved the following components: (1) individuals maintained the authority and influence to address their common concerns; (2) trust and cooperation must be the common threads that sew the different phases of the process together; and (3) individual members of the collaborative team were entitled and encouraged to remain creative, flexible; and (4) continue to combine unconventional ingredients in novel ways to achieve the desired outcomes (Bhavnagri et al., 2006; Dettmer et al., 2002; Reinhiller, 1999; Saskatchewan Learning, 1999; Warren, 2005).

Even though the three women did not clearly state those four factors when describing the PPP process, they did touch upon each of those four factors during the duration of their three interviews. Nicole often made reference, in her interviews, to the importance of each team

member feeling comfortable with expressing his or her opinions and concerns. She described the process of this sharing as *enriching*. Kate made numerous references to the importance of developing a solid relationship with her colleagues. She stated: “I guess, you also need to know the teachers that you are working with and it helps for you to know who will need more support [with writing the PPP goals] then the other ones”. Meredith described PPP goals design as a *creative* process. Kate’s PPP team resorted to unconventional strategies when they chose to write the PPP goals prior to meeting with the parents. She explained:

...this case was difficult because the parents were away on working trips. So, we just met with them after [the student’s teachers and resource room teacher had written the PPP and sent it to the division office] and...were open to changing at that point in time any...information that we had collected or added anything that they still wanted.

Kate’s solution was an example of what some authors would have referred to as an unconventional way to achieve the desired outcomes (Bhavnagri et al., 2006; Dettmer et al., 2002; Reinhiller, 1999; Saskatchewan Learning, 1999; Warren, 2005). Creative problem solving can also be useful when you are faced with a lack of time. The next section describes how the study’s participants dealt with a lack of time.

***Lack of time.*** The degree to which the lack of time affected this study’s participants was most evident to me when Meredith stated: “We had 45 minutes to work with [to conduct two PPP meetings].” Even though Meredith did not describe the brief time period as having a negative impact on the PPP process, she did admit that the reason for this brief time period was that no other time was available for the team to meet. The researcher interpreted Meredith’s body language, of shrugging shoulders, and tone in her voice, accompanied by a shy chuckle, to indicate that she would have increased the duration of the meeting if she had the opportunity. Numerous authors listed an appropriate amount of allotted time as a key resource to ensure the

effectiveness of the PPP process by numerous authors (Eaker et al., 2003; Kiresuk et al., 1994; Reinhiller, 1999).

Another possible sign that the PPP team was affected by a lack of time, was that the PPP team approached the evaluation portion of the process unprepared. The data collection was not complete when the team gathered for the review of the PPP. This resulted in the need for more responsibilities to be delegated and more informal conversations to occur before Meredith could complete the PPP. The effectiveness of the PPP process had been negatively affected by the lack of time. Reinhiller (1999) labeled lack of time as a possible barrier to collaboration. Problem solving was listed as an element of collaboration (Dettmer et al., 1993). The lack of data negatively affected the team's efforts to complete their task. The lack of an effective data collection phase negatively impacted the effectiveness of the PPP process. A discussion on the participants' perspectives of parent-teacher relations follows.

***Flexibility with Parents.*** During interviews with all three participants, a common theme was interaction with parents. Specifically, this interaction referred to fostering a welcoming environment which catered to the needs of the parents and family. Meredith was the first person to speak of this topic, indicating complete acceptance that the parents, of the child she chose to focus on, had not accepted the school's invitation to attend the PPP meeting. She explained that the parents had said "No, don't worry. Just send the PPP and we'll sign it." A flexible approach was listed as a characteristic of collaboration numerous times in the literature (Bhavnagri et al., 2006; Dettmer et al., 2002; Reinhiller, 1999; Saskatchewan Learning, 1999; Warren, 2005). If Meredith had not been flexible and had demanded the parents attend the meeting, relations between the school and student's family could have been negatively impacted.

Each resource room teacher invited parents to attend the meeting, allowing the parents an opportunity to maintain the authority and influence to address their common concerns (Bhavnagri et al., 2006; Dettmer et al., 2002; Reinhiller, 1999; Saskatchewan Learning, 1999; Warren, 2005). The invitation provided each resource room teacher with an opportunity to foster a cooperative environment. The manner in which each of this study's participants solved the challenge of parental involvement showed a skill for flexibility and creativity (Bhavnagri et al., 2006; Dettmer et al., 2002; Reinhiller, 1999; Saskatchewan Learning, 1999; Warren, 2005).

Nicole spoke, at length, about the importance of a welcoming environment. She said:

Anyone who recognizes that a child's school life is only part of their school life, recognizes they need to reach out and, perhaps...this too: that we recognize that there are times when there are parents who see the school as a threatening and intimidating place to be. So, if they have to come to formalized meetings, in some way, that may be frightening and, in other ways, it might be helpful to them to realize that we are asking them questions and inviting them. We need them in this process and, so, that might...be...empowering for them too.

Friend and Cook (1991) emphasized the importance of each team member willingly taking part in the collaborative process to ensure success. That willingness would be fostered by the welcoming environment that Nicole stressed. The literature stressed the importance of family being in attendance for the PPP meeting to ensure effective PPP design and ensure a healthy relationship between school and family (Bhavnagri et al., 2006; Dettmer et al., 2002; Reinhiller, 1999; Saskatchewan Learning, 1999; Warren, 2005). The next section focuses on the demanding workload of a resource room teacher.

***A Demanding Workload.*** The resource room teacher's demanding workload was a common theme that was often mentioned in all three participants' interviews. During their interviews, each participant focused on different aspects of her daily responsibilities. Nicole's voice took on an exhausted tone when she explained to me that she was able to complete all of her daily responsibilities because that was her job and she did what was expected of her. Kate

voiced concern about the number of responsibilities that a resource room teacher faced during the school day. She stated:

It is challenging just because there are just so many impeding priorities. So, if we look at the bigger part of the picture, I think the Ministry places the division and the division, of course, has its priorities, and then the school has its business that it has to look after at its own level...I think, just being a resource room teacher, your case load is demanding and then being a vice principal is demanding. So, I usually have to e-mail or in passing we try to set up a meeting, and it's usually at a lunch or, sometimes, it's informal, but usually it's at lunch, or before, or after school that we meet...or on the teacher's prep if it works out...if it works out.

The various types of meetings Kate took part included: informal meetings to discuss a child's progress meetings; to assist a teacher with problem solving; facilitating inservices on special education related topics during staff meetings; and formal PPP meetings. During her interviews, Kate often commented on how difficult it was for her to meet all of her professional obligations during a single workday.

When asked how a resource room teacher meets her professional obligations, Nicole was unable to provide specific suggestions. She described her job as "...flying by the seat of your pants." This comment emphasized, for the researcher, how large a resource room teacher's workload can be and how short the day could seem to be. Implications of a large workload could include: staff feeling work-related stress, and quality of staff work being negatively impacted.

The resource room teacher's demanding workload was a common theme that was often mentioned in all three participants' interviews, even though the women chose different approaches to their work. Both Kate and Nicole chose the Resource/Consulting Teacher Program Model. This model enabled each woman to provide direct service to his/her students through instruction and indirect service in the form of consultation with classroom teachers for portions of the school day (Idol et al., 1986). Meredith's approach was more similar to the role of a collaborative consultant which enabled her to provide indirect service delivery (Reinhiller,

1999). A discussion of the participants' perspectives of EA attendance at PPP meetings is provided in the next section.

*EA Attendance at Meetings.* A common theme was concern about whether the student's EA would be able to attend the PPP meeting. Nicole explained to me that in order for an EA to attend a PPP meeting, one of three things had to occur: (1) the EA be provided additional pay for his/her hours spent outside of the workday; (2) the EA be provided time in lieu for his/her hours spent outside of the workday; or (3) the PPP meeting be scheduled during school hours. Even though Nicole had mentioned additional pay as a possible solution, none of the participants entertained the thought outside of that one comment. Nicole explained that it was very difficult to coordinate the parents', teacher's, and EA's work schedule in order to provide a meeting time that could occur during the school day. This was made evident to me by Meredith who expressed surprise that the student's EA could attend the PPP meeting.

Kate explained that, for whatever reason, not all schools had the luxury of offering EAs time in lieu for attending a meeting outside of their workday. She explained the reason for her concern:

...as we look at different models for EA support, um, I also...[would like to mention that the] EA [assigned to the student] also wasn't able to attend that meeting because of the time it was held even though they were invited...so, I would like to say that that's important because they have important insights and I think if we don't invite them...I think that's another administrative issue that should, you know, [be considered by administrators]...I think when you don't at least invite them... it becomes a time in lieu sort of thing; an administrative sort of thing with how you are going to handle those hours, but I think the message that is sometimes sent is that they are not a valued member of the school team.

Closely related to the theme of time in lieu was the lacking of funds to provide financial reimbursement to EAs who attended PPP meetings outside their workday. All three women commented on how difficult it was to arrange for the EA to be present in the EA meetings, but it was Kate and Meredith who mentioned that the option of providing financial reimbursement as a

possible solution that was not available at their schools. Dettmer et al. (1993) warned that money could act as a barrier for the collaborative effort. No specific details as to the amount of money or how these funds were to be procured were provided in the literature (Dettmer et al., 1993). A discussion of rubrics in the context of the PPP meeting is provided in the next section.

***Rubrics in the Context of the PPP Meeting.*** All of the participants for this case study shared the opinion that the rubric outcome sampling should be discussed during the summer PPP meeting and not at a separate time. The rubric process was not explicitly described by either Kate or Nicole, but based on their comments included in the PPP document and made during their interviews, I felt that their approach would be similar to that of Meredith's. Meredith felt it very appropriate to begin the discussion about what level of progress the child had achieved, but would not expect the rubric document completed until after the meeting by those who had been delegated the responsibility. No mention of the opportune time to discuss the rubric outcome sampling was mentioned in any of the literature, but all three participants were able to answer the interviewer's related questions quickly and confidently.

Two themes were discussed at length by all of the participants: the understanding for the need of accountability; and the concern that this need added to their already overly demanding list of responsibilities. Meredith's frustration was very evident when she described the rubric process as being "...a pain in the butt." She stated:

...I was just talking about the hoop jumping that resource teachers, classroom teachers, and EAs have to do for Sask Ed. [Saskatchewan Ministry of Education], but on the other hand, it really quantifies down to the nitty gritty what the students are doing and have achieved and it works to making the teachers, especially, more accountable for their PPP kids because in the past I think, and I think it still happens a lot, it's stuffed in a drawer and it's not looked at again until review times.

Kate's opinion was reminiscent of Meredith's reference to *hoop jumping*:

I think it's a duplication of the Personal Program Plan. I don't think it assists parents anymore than the PPP in understanding. So, I think it is more of a provincial Ministry way of collecting data, so I'm fine with that, but I don't see it as a tool for helping parents with understanding their student. I would say from a resource teacher, I feel it is another piece of paperwork.

The literature described rubrics as a useful tool for assuring an assessment of outcome based upon measures that were both content relevant and realistically scaled for every student (Kiresuk et al., 1994). Rubrics had proven to be effective in special education (Kiresuk et al., 1994).

However, Nicole saw a flaw in rubric design:

I think it is important that we're accountable to the Ministry; accountable to the parents; accountable to the child; and accountable to each other. ...I think it's just something that can be challenging because in any child's life... I will go back to the road is not always smooth; if there's a family break-up; if there's a change in [medication]; if there is a new diagnosis... There is all sorts of things that can impede a child's progress and then you go back and you score the SMART goals and you feel that you did not do very well... There's not necessarily a place to say "Yeah, but..." and is there a place for *but's* in this?

Even though she valued sense of accountability the rubrics were intended to provide, Nicole viewed the rubric process as being rigid and lacking the flexibility to accommodate for changes in a child's life. The following section discusses the participants' perspectives on the difference of knowledge base and level of expertise present in a PPP team.

***Difference of Knowledge Base and Level of Expertise.*** Both Meredith and Kate believed that differing knowledge bases and levels of expertise could have a negative impact on the collaborative efforts of the PPP team. The two women both listed a difference in knowledge base as a possible deterrent of open and effective communication and collaboration between teachers. This view was reflective of the literature which listed different knowledge bases and skills as possible barriers of the collaborative process (Dettmer et al., 1993; Kiresuk et al., 1994). Meredith made numerous references to her concerns about how much the regular classroom

teacher understood of the PPP process. Kate described an experience, unrelated to Melanie's PPP, in which different knowledge bases led to a negative situation for a child:

I think that you [the regular classroom teacher and resource room teacher] can have differing opinions on things. So, for instance a different example would be I have a student who um, has significant, um, comprehension issues, so once you hit middle years, and it's a boy, how do you determine...distinguish...what is attention seeking behavior and when a student really doesn't understand. So, a classroom teacher, for instance, sees it as the child is attention seeking and you are telling the teacher "No, the kid doesn't really get it." And then you go into the PPP meeting with the parents and the child and the child starts crying and it's clear he doesn't really get it, but the teacher, you know, sees it differently.

Nicole's view on this matter was the opposite from that of the other two resource room teachers. She believed that a difference in knowledge base and levels of expertise could enrich the experience for the PPP team and contribute to the collaborative effort. She described the teachers and parents, involved in the PPP process, as stakeholders. She explained:

...I think sometimes some of us may have blinders on and see a child in a certain way or certain goals as really necessary. I think, as we have, speech and language paths, we have OTs, we have councillors,...parents, EAs, administrators...whatever the case may be...people from Child and Youth, a psychiatrist present...they all have different views so that we can, hopefully, put the pieces together...much like a puzzle...and with all of that information then decide what's important and what is feasible for a school to do.

Nicole also held the entire PPP team responsible for facilitating the goals:

Everyone has a part in terms of making sure the goals are reached. We all have a part in choosing materials and using those teachable moments. Like, if we all know what the goals are, whether I am seeing this child in the hall or the teacher is teaching something in the classroom or the parent is at home. If we all know we're headed then we can all address it at different settings and hopefully help with some transference.

Both Kate and Nicole were both vocal about the need for university training of regular classroom teachers to be improved and expanded in the area of special education. Meredith was unsure of the training her colleague had received and seemed to not be comfortable with inquiring into the matter. Nicole also expressed concern that she believed that educational

psychologists and special education teachers could receive more training in the administering of assessments and the planning appropriate programs. Nicole explained:

I guess that I have many concerns when it comes to special ed.; in terms of training, in general to become a special ed. teacher. I think there is more to special ed. than being a master teacher and I think a resource teacher can be a master teacher, but I don't think a master teacher can be a resource teacher. I think you need much more training in terms of assessment and where to go with that assessment than the regular teacher gets in his or her training. I'm also extremely disappointed that training in, probably, the last 15 or 20 years has moved to textbook instead of actual student contact. When I listen to [Educational Psychologists] I feel that...I got as much training in assessment as they're getting before they [graduate from university] and to me that is disappointing because I think they need much more hands on [experience]...I think resource teachers need much more hands on in terms of assessing real children and planning programs around that assessment, as well as being handed assessments and being able to plan programs around that assessment and seeing where it goes from there.

Kate believed that steps should be taken at the division, university and Ministry levels to ensure that professional development opportunities and resources were made more accessible.

She stated:

...as long as we continue to have special education on a different part of the web space that is out there with the ministry; as long as we continue to have special education and curriculum meeting and discussing, it's going to affect how the Personal Program is viewed and seen by general education teachers and how ownership is taken for that; as long as the University [of Saskatchewan] continues to just have one class that focuses on exceptionalities and I know that are competing priorities, but I think integration of diversity and how you support diversity in the classroom has to be an element in the classes that university students are taking, um, then we are going to work in a silo and I think that is how special [education] works...in a silo. I think it's come a long way, but I think we have a long, long ways to go when we talk about regular and special education.

Her comments were reminiscent of the literature which stated that appropriate professional development was a necessity for the success of any collaborative effort (Dettmer et al., 2003; Eaker et al., 2002; Gable et al., 2004; Johnson et al., 1988; Mills, 1996; Reinhiller, 1999; Twachtman-Cullen & Twachtman-Reilly, 2002; Warren, 2005).

What Kate perceived to be as a lack of training at the university and division office level, combined with Saskatchewan Ministry of Education resources that were difficult to locate, had

made Kate resort to creating her own training program of sorts for her colleagues. She explained her reason for beginning the training program:

I just asked my staff what *Response to Intervention* was. My principal put up his hand...of a staff of over thirty people. So, again, administrators look to resource room teachers as the experts in the building and I think its intimidating [to some resource room teachers to instruct their colleagues on the topic]... Who at the division level right now [has been given information on *Response to Intervention*]? Administrators, both principals and vice principals, in our community have been given information on *Response to Intervention*, um, resource teachers have, but who's responsibility is it then to take it back to classroom teachers? If the administrator doesn't do it and if the resource room teacher doesn't do it, how does the classroom teacher find out about [what] tier one and tier two is unless it's just in conversation when you [as the resource room teacher, discuss the topic with a colleague]?

Kate could not think of another possible solution to this problem, other than she being responsible for training the staff. She viewed this training as one more task to an already extensive list of responsibilities.

Benjamin (2007) would consider collaboration, as a counterpart to teamwork, a key element of quality. The terms *solution generation* and *action planning* (Benjamin, 2007) are reminiscent of how Saskatchewan Learning (2006a) described the PPP process and the term *mechanism for tracking* described a rubric outcome. Kiresuk et al. (1994) stressed that the individual responsible for the completion of a rubric must receive the appropriate training. Inappropriate training would negatively impact the quality of a PPP (Benjamin, 2007; Kiresuk et al., 1994; Saskatchewan Learning, 2006a). Benjamin (2007) warned that the lack of quality would result in the customer's (i.e., the student's) needs not being met. Ineffective teacher training would negatively impact student outcomes. The next section provides a discussion on visual aides in the PPP meeting.

***Visual Aides in the PPP Meeting.*** Kate and Meredith both saw the merit in using visual aides for all of their PPP meetings. Both of these women provided hard copies of the previous season's PPP to each team member. Meredith also enabled her team members to see the

computer screen which displayed the most current PPP. Kate provided visual aides to her fellow team members, in the form of hard copies of the PPP document, as well as providing many different types of visual aides to assist her teaching colleagues with writing of the PPPs. Nicole did not use any visual aides for that particular PPP meeting, explaining that the previous PPP meetings had gone so smoothly that there was no need for visual aides.

There was no direct mention, in the literature, of how visual aides could benefit the collaborative effort. It is the opinion of the researcher that visual aides could be used to diminish the effects of such collaborative barriers as differing levels of teacher preparation and experience and ethnic backgrounds (Dettmer, 1993; Gable et al., 2004; Hilton & Ringlaben, 1998; Reinhiller, 1999). Kate provided visual aides to her colleagues to assist them with the writing of SMART goals. Meredith provided visual aides to her team members to support their understanding of what was being said in the meeting. A discussion of the dual role as resource room teacher and vice principal is included in the next section.

***Dual Role as Resource Room Teacher and Vice Principal.*** Meredith was the one participant who did not have the dual role of vice principal and resource room teacher. Both Nicole and Kate acted as case manager and administrative team representative during their PPP meetings. Kate shared the different ways that she felt having the dual role in her school benefitted her as a resource room teacher. It was during proofreading of a teacher's report cards, as the school's vice principal, when she realized the teacher did not understand the adaptive dimension as well as Kate thought she did. She said

...it was evident to me, in my other role as vice principal, that when she handed in the report card [for me to proofread] without any percentages or comments, that said to me she still wasn't understanding [how to effectively use the adaptive dimension]. I asked her if she had changed the curricular objectives and she hadn't. She had just adapted it, but she felt that she didn't need to give her marks so,...again, I guess that it didn't necessarily happen during the Personal

Program Plan, but it's another piece of the [puzzle]...it shows...how important [it is for] a resource teacher is to support the classroom teacher.

Nicole also saw her dual role as vice principal and resource room teacher as beneficial. She used anecdotal records about the student's behavior that she made as a vice principal during the data collection phase of the PPP process. Those notes would not have been available to her if she had not had the dual roles.

Dettmer et al.'s (1993) discussion on the importance of role clarity was related to the topic of dual roles. The literature stated that it was imperative that role clarity exist within any collaborative process and that role duality could be detrimental to the process. Kate and Nicole both found their dual roles as vice principal and resource room teacher to be beneficial to their mission of completing the PPP cycle with their teams. Their comments indicated that these two women had clearly defined, for themselves, their dual roles and understood how the two positions could be used to benefit them. The next section describes the strengths of the study.

### ***Strengths of the Current Study***

Strengths of the study included the research topic and the method in which the data was collected. To date, there is no published data on resource room teachers' perceptions of the effects of the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education requirements on the collaborative efforts of the PPP team. This study provides a starting point for an area of study that is lacking in special education. Data collection included: three separate interviews with each participant; my own notes taken during the interviews; and an analysis of the related PPPs and rubrics. The collected data provided an opportunity for an in-depth examination of the participants' perspectives on the changes to the PPP requirements made by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education during the past three years.

### *Confirming Findings*

Many results of this study confirmed existing literature on collaboration, possible barriers, and the required resources for collaboration. Elements that could interfere with the effectiveness of the collaborative process included: unequal distribution of prior knowledge on a topic; the lacking of skills of individual participants, such as communication and facilitation; and difference in socioeconomic, racial, ethnic, religious backgrounds (Dettmer et al., 1993; Hilton & Ringlaben, 1998; Twachtman-Cullen & Twachtman-Reilly, 2002). The literature listed money, time, appropriate professional development, and supportive leadership as required resources of collaboration (Eaker et al., 2002; Johnson et al., 1988; Mills, 1996; Reinhiller, 1998; Warren, 2005). The participants listed the lacking of these resources as barriers of their collaborative efforts.

The comments made by the participants supported the literature, which indicated the various and numerous barriers of the collaborative process. The resource room teachers detailed a list of barriers almost identical to each other's comments, as well as the barriers described in the literature. The actions that the participants took to promote collaboration were also reflective of the literature. The use of visual aides and open communication, as well as role delegation, and role clarification were all present in each of the three subunits of this study.

This study highlighted the internal struggle that the participating resource room teachers were experiencing in the context of their professional responsibilities. The desire to design and manage a beneficial PPP for their student, fulfill their professional responsibilities, and to find the time to accomplish these goals was evident during the multiple interviews. The study's participants displayed emotions ranging from frustration and disappointment to pride and a sense of camaraderie. At different times, each of the three participants could be described as

appearing to be tired, overworked, and overwhelmed by their responsibilities. The next section focuses on the limitations of the research.

### ***Limitations of Research***

The findings of any research must be considered within its own limitations. It should be noted that a pilot test of the interview questions did not occur, nor was any validity data collected. This case study focused on three elementary school resource room teachers who work in an urban school division in central Saskatchewan. Due to the nature of this descriptive case study, it cannot be generalized to the larger population, but does provide detailed information on the perspectives and opinions on these three women on a topic that has not been documented as of yet in Saskatchewan. Future research on the perspectives of resource room teachers in rural areas or other urban areas would address this limitation.

The purpose of the study was to explore the overall perceptions that resource room teachers had of the required SMART goals, rubric outcome sampling, and the collaborative effort of Personal Program Planning team. As a result, the findings of this case study may not easily be replicated. However, the information provided can help to provide a starting point for discussion on the uses and perceptions of these three resource room teachers.

Another limitation of the research is that the participants' biased views will have affected my findings and conclusions. To limit the affect of these biases, the findings of the case study were discussed in terms of the literature.

### ***My Final Reflections as a Researcher***

During the multiple interviews that were conducted, I was astounded how similar these women's comments were to the literature on the promoters and barriers of collaboration. As we progressed through the interviews, each participant, at different times, gave me the impression of

being tired, overworked, and overwhelmed by her professional responsibilities. The participants' comments gave me the impression that they were willing to do whatever it took to make the PPP process and rubric outcome sampling as effective as possible. The degree to which all three women valued the relationship between home and school was evident in the teachers' willingness to adapt to the needs of the parents. All three resource room teachers gave me the impression of wanting to be accountable to the family, division, and the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, but I found it curious that each time they spoke of the rubric outcome sampling they also mentioned how it added to their list of responsibilities. I found it curious that there was only one barrier to collaboration that was mentioned by all three participants that was not mentioned in the literature: the number of responsibilities that one member of the PPP team was assigned.

### ***Strengths of the Study***

Strengths within the present study were the multiple interviews with each participant. A review of the related PPP and rubric outcome sampling occurred when applicable. This data was intended to ensure that the collaborative efforts of each PPP team successfully achieved the PPP requirements set by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education. The results of the review of all related documents indicated that each PPP team met the requirements of the 2008-2009 Saskatchewan Ministry of Education requirements, but the guidelines of the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education were not followed completely depending on the team's situation and circumstances. A discussion of recommendations for future research is provided in the next section.

### ***Recommendations for Future Research***

The major purpose of this study was to inspire further research into whether the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education's changes to the PPP requirements has had any effect on the

collaborative process of the PPP. I feel that it would be beneficial for further case studies to focus on the opinions and perspectives of regular classroom teachers, EAs, administration, students with Intensive Supports, and parents and/or guardians of individuals with Intensive Supports. Data collected from each of these groups would add to the small body of research in the area. Special education teachers who have teaching assignments other than resource room would also be able to provide a unique perspective on the PPP requirement changes. Each teaching assignment has a unique set of professional requirements. With those professional requirements, would come a unique perspective.

This study provided me a rare opportunity to see a process that had become routine to me, through the eyes of three different resource room teachers. Listening to the participants' comments reinforced what I had learned from the literature. My learning was amplified as I listened to my participants' stories and experiences within a Saskatchewan context. My hope is that this descriptive study will inspire other researchers to learn more on whether the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education's PPP requirement changes have had any effect on the collaborative efforts of the PPP team.

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APPENDIX A



**Application Form  
For Permission to Conduct  
Research in Saskatoon Public Schools**

Completed application forms are submitted to **Dr. Scott Tunison, Coordinator: Research and Measurement.**

**APPLICANT(S)**

Name: Tricia M. Demmans Telephone: 683-0412

Address: #85~325 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. N

Postal Code: S7K 2P7 Present Position On Leave

If the study is a requirement for a degree, please specify which degree: Master's

Will applicant actually conduct study? Yes  No

If NO, please give name, position and qualifications of person(s) who will conduct the study:

**DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED STUDY**

Title of Study: A Study on the Relation between Saskatchewan Ministry of Education Requirements and School Team Collaboration

Statement of Problem/Research Question:

How do resource room teachers view each team member's ability to participate in the Development and evaluation of the SMART goals and rubric outcome sampling? What is the overall perception that resource room teachers have of the SMART goal and rubric outcome sampling's ability to clarify the intent of a particular goal for the PPP ? .team ?

Significance of Study: (i.e. How will this study contribute to the improvement of education in Saskatoon Public Schools?)

The study will contribute to the improvement of education in Saskatoon Public Schools by indicating which areas of the PPP process are most challenging for the PPP team members so that those areas may be focused on and remedied.

Research Methodology: (please check the appropriate boxes)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> questionnaire                      | <input type="checkbox"/> participant observation      |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> individual interview(s) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> document analysis |
| <input type="checkbox"/> focus group(s)                     | <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)              |

Intended Use of Results: (please check the appropriate boxes)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> published as a Masters' thesis/project | <input type="checkbox"/> published as part of a conference presentation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> published as a Doctorate dissertation             | <input type="checkbox"/> not published                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> published in a scholarly journal                  | <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)                                |

### **PARTICIPANTS**

Number of participants desired who are: (please check the appropriate boxes)

- |   |           |                 |       |                            |      |             |
|---|-----------|-----------------|-------|----------------------------|------|-------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pupils:   | Number    | <u>3</u>        | Grade | <u>K-8</u>                 | Time | <u>None</u> |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Teachers: | Number    | <u>3</u>        | Time  | <u>3-1 hour interviews</u> |      |             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Principals:          | Number    | <u>        </u> | Time  | <u>        </u>            |      |             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other                | (specify) |                 |       |                            |      |             |

Proposed school sites (indicate name if possible):

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The researcher work with the participants: (please check the appropriate boxes)

- individually  
 small groups  
 entire class(s)

### **TIMEFRAME**

Proposed Dates for: Commencing: April, 2009      Completing: June, 2009

### **REQUIRED ATTACHMENTS**

The following attachments are required prior to processing the application: (please check if the attachment is enclosed)

- copies of consent forms, including the parent permission letter  
 copies of all tests, questionnaires or interview questions that will be given to the subjects  
 a signed letter or certificate of approval from the appropriate ethics review committee

information package provided to the ethics committee

### UNIVERSITY AUTHORIZATION

If this application is being conducted within the context of an academic institution, the research design, and instruments mentioned herein have been approved by:

Institutional Research Ethics Board

\_\_\_\_\_ Date Approved

Institutional Research Ethics Review is in process\*

\* Final school board approval is contingent upon research ethics board approval.

Faculty Advisor's or Department Head's Name:

University:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Faculty Advisor's or Department Head's Signature:

Date:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### COMMITMENT OF RESEARCHER(S)

I am willing to provide a final report of my study to Saskatoon Public Schools.

I am willing to provide a presentation of my research findings to schools and/or the school division.

I agree to adhere to the ethical standards and procedures as outlined in my application package.

I agree to seek permission to make any changes in the methodology outlined in this application.

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

Mail your application to:  
Saskatoon Public Schools  
Attention: Dr. Scott Tunison  
310 21<sup>st</sup> Street East  
Saskatoon SK S7K 1M7

## **APPENDIX B**

### **CONSENT FORM**

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled *The Relation between Personal Program Plan Requirements and School Team Collaboration*. Please read this form carefully, and feel free to ask questions you might have.

**Researcher(s):** Tricia M. Demmans, Educational Psychology and Special Education, University of Saskatchewan, the researcher can be reached at 683-0412.

**Purpose and Procedure:** The purpose of the study is to learn the overall perceptions that resource room teachers have of the required SMART goals and rubric outcome sampling in respect to their effect on the collaborative effort of Personal Program Planning team.

Each participant will be interviewed on three occasions. Each interview will be 1 hour length. The first interview will occur approximately one week prior to the PPP meeting of the designated student, in May 2009. The second interview will occur approximately 24 hours after the PPP meeting of the designated student. The third interview will occur approximately one week after the June 2009 Review PPP document has been completed. The main purpose of the interviews will be to develop an understanding of the resource room teachers' present perception of the PPP process and the different aspects of collaboration. Each interview will be tape recorded. The participant will be permitted to request that the recording device be turned off at any time.

The collected data for this master thesis project is intended to be used to report to the Saskatoon Public School Division and the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education on the resource teachers' view of how the recent changes of the Special Education Funding Grant have affected the collaborative efforts of the PPP team. It is the hope of the researcher that the proposed study will provide some insight for special education teachers, parents and administration. There is the possibility of publication in scholarly journals.

**Potential Benefits:** Potential benefits for students whose PPPs will be discussed include improvement of their resource room teachers' abilities to complete the PPP. Potential benefits for participants include helping clarify the PPP process for Saskatchewan teachers. There are no known risks involved with participating in the study either for teachers or students.

**Potential Risks:** There are no known risks in participating in this study.

**Confidentiality:** All identifying information about students, PPP team members, and schools will be kept confidential and will be replaced with pseudonyms.

**Right to Withdraw:** Your participation is voluntary, and you can answer only those questions that you are comfortable with. There is no guarantee that you will personally benefit from your involvement. The information that is shared will be held in strict confidence and discussed only with the research team. You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, at any time, without penalty of any sort. If you withdraw from the research project at any time, any data that you have contributed will be destroyed at your request.

**Questions:** If you have any questions concerning the research project, please feel free to ask at any point; you are also free to contact the researcher at the numbers provided if you have other questions. This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board on (**insert date**). Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Ethics Office (966-2084). Out of town participants may call collect.

**Follow-Up or Debriefing:** The researcher’s informed consent form will include her contact information as well as anticipated completion date. After the final interview, participants will be told to contact the researcher after the study’s completion if they are interested in the findings.

**Consent to Participate:** “I have read and understood the description provided; I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my/our questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project, understanding that I may withdraw my consent at any time. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of Participant)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Participant)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Researcher)

## APPENDIX C

### CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled *The Relation between Personal Program Plan Requirements and School Team Collaboration*. Please read this form carefully, and feel free to ask questions you might have.

**Researcher(s):** Tricia M. Demmans, Educational Psychology and Special Education, University of Saskatchewan, the researcher can be reached at 683-0412.

**Purpose and Procedure:** The purpose of the study is to learn the overall perceptions that resource room teachers have of the required SMART goals and rubric outcome sampling in respect to their effect on the collaborative effort of the Personal Program Planning team.

Your child's resource room teacher has agreed to participate in this study and has selected your child's PPP as a focus of the study. To have a concrete understanding of the teacher's comments, the researcher requires to read your child's PPP.

The collected data for this master thesis project is intended to be used to report to the Saskatoon Public School Division and the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education on the resource teachers' view of how the recent changes of the Special Education Funding Grant have affected the collaborative efforts of the PPP team. It is the hope of the researcher that the proposed study will provide some insight for special education teachers, parents and administration. There is the possibility of publication in scholarly journals.

**Potential Benefits:** Potential benefits for students whose PPPs will be discussed include improvement of their resource room teachers' abilities to complete the PPP. Potential benefits for participants include helping clarify the PPP process for Saskatchewan teachers. There are no known risks involved with participating in the study either for teachers or students.

**Potential Risks:** There are no known risks in participating in this study.

**Confidentiality:** All identifying information about students, PPP team members, and schools will be kept confidential and will be replaced with pseudonyms.

**Right to Withdraw:** Your participation is voluntary, and you can answer only those questions that you are comfortable with. There is no guarantee that you will personally benefit from your involvement. The information that is shared will be held in strict confidence and discussed only with the research team. You may withdraw from

the research project for any reason, at any time, without penalty of any sort. If you withdraw from the research project at any time, any data that you have contributed will be destroyed at your request.

**Questions:** If you have any questions concerning the research project, please feel free to ask at any point; you are also free to contact the researcher at the numbers provided if you have other questions. This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board on (**insert date**). Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Ethics Office (966-2084). Out of town participants may call collect.

**Follow-Up or Debriefing:** The researcher's informed consent form will include her contact information as well as anticipated completion date. After the final interview, participants will be told to contact the researcher after the study's completion if they are interested in the findings.

**Consent to Participate:** "I have read and understood the description provided; I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my/our questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project, understanding that I may withdraw my consent at any time. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of Participant)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Participant)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Researcher)

## **APPENDIX D**

### **Interview Questions Part 1**

1. Which three SMART goals have you chosen to focus upon for this study and what PPP domains does each goal pertain to?

2 a. In your opinion, has the child progressed with (state the first goal)?

2 b. How did you come to that conclusion (I.E., What information did you base your answer on?)

2 c. Are there PPP team members that you believe may disagree with your opinion? If so, why?

3 a. In your opinion, has the child progressed with (state the second goal)?

3 b. How did you come to that conclusion (I.E., What information did you base your answer on?)

3 c. Are there PPP team members that you believe may disagree with your opinion? If so, why?

4 a. In your opinion, has the child progressed with (state the second goal)?

4 b. How did you come to that conclusion (I.E., What information did you base your answer on?)

4 c. Are there PPP team members that you believe may disagree with your opinion? If so, why?

5. Thinking back to the September and March PPP meetings, did any of PPP team members experience challenges participating in the conversations pertaining to the design of the SMART goals and/or rubrics? If so, why do you think that?

## **APPENDIX E**

### **Interview Questions Part 2**

1 a. What adjective do you think best describes how you feel about that particular PPP meeting?

1 b. Why do you think you feel that way?

2 a. What adjective do you think best describes the effectiveness of that particular PPP meeting?

2 b. How did you come to that conclusion?

3 a. Were you concerned whether any of PPP team members were having difficulty following the conversation during any portion of the meeting?

3 b. What information do you base your previous answer on?

3 c. What steps, if any, were taken to ensure that all members understood the topics discussed during the PPP meeting?

4. Are there PPP team members that you believe may disagree with your opinion? If so, why?

5 a. In your opinion, has the child progressed with (state the second goal)?

5 b. How did you come to that conclusion (I.E., What information did you base your answer on?)

5 c. Are there PPP team members that you believe may disagree with your opinion? If so, why?

6. If you had the chance to change any element of that PPP meeting what would it be and why?

## **APPENDIX F**

### **Interview Questions Part 3**

1. When is the optimal time to review and complete outcome rubric sampling?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. When was the outcome rubric sampling, that was connected with the PPP you chose to focus upon, reviewed and completed?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. How were the participants of the outcome rubric sampling review and completion selected?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 4 a. What adjective do you think best describes how you feel about that particular review of the outcome rubric sampling?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 4 b. How did you come to that conclusion?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 5 a. Were you concerned whether any of the individuals were having difficulty following the conversation during any portion of the meeting?

5 b. What information do you base your previous answer on?

6 a. What steps, if any, were taken to ensure that all participants of the rubric outcome sampling understood the topics discussed during the meeting(s)?

6 b. How did you come to that conclusion (I.E., What information did you base your answer on?)

7. If you had the chance to change any element of the rubric outcome sampling process, what would it be?

## APPENDIX G

### Meredith Interview One

Trish: Okay. So, we will begin now. We will go through the questions and if you have any, uh, if you would like to ask me a question to clarify your understanding of a particular question just let me know. During the interview you'll notice that I'll be jotting down some things that's because I'm a visual learner

Meredith: Me too.

Trish: So I'll be jotting down things so that I fully understand your answers. Umm...if you are ready? So let's get started. 1a: Which three SMART goals have you chosen to focus on for this study and what domains does each goal pertain to?

Meredith: Um....First one is... the target is... coming in when the bell rings and by the PPP domain do you mean "Independence/Problem Solving/Work Skills"?

Trish: Yeah.

Meredith: Reading sight words under "Academics" and counting to twenty under "Academics".

Trish: I'm sorry. What was the third?

Meredith: Counting to twenty.

Trish: May I ask the grade of the child?

Meredith: One.

Trish: Okay. Why did you choose those particular goals?

Meredith: Umm....Because she wasn't coming in when the bell rang unless the EA went out and dragged her in and her sight words...umm...she could only read twenty. Now this is a Downes Syndrome child and, uh, I think she is repeating her first year. No, she did a Kindergarten, then she did a K/1 year and then, now, she is doing a grade one year and for the last one counting to twenty; she was able to count to ten but often skipped six and if she counted higher she would skip fourteen. So, she was inconsistent with counting to twenty.

Trish: In your opinion, has the child progressed with the first goal which was coming in after recess?

Meredith: Yes. Umm...she mostly is coming in. First of all, we started to have her come in with her classroom teachers, instead of the EA, and then we had her come in with the supervising staff member. Now, I have been noticing she mostly comes in on her own with the other children; which is great.

Trish: So, what sort of information do you base your answer on? For example, anecdotal records or observation or...

Meredith: Observation from when I'm on supervision. We haven't actually assessed her yet.

Trish: Oh, okay. So, the PPP meeting has not occurred?

Meredith: No.

Trish: Okay. Are there PPP team members that you believe may disagree with your opinion?

Meredith: Uh...no.

Trish: No? So, you feel everyone is on the same page when it comes to this sort of thing?

Meredith: Absolutely.

Trish: What do you base your answer on?

Meredith: A good working relationship with the classroom teacher and the EA and I always ask a lot of questions and clarify things and if there is someone who is not on the same page we get there.

Trish: Very cool. Excellent. How would you define "a good working relationship"? I thought that was a really interesting phrase you used.

Meredith: Um...constant, well, not constant, frequent verbal contact. You know, in passing, talking to them about how she is doing.

Trish: Okay.

Meredith: And when I am seeing things that I have questions I ask the questions and say "What can we do about that?"

Trish: Okay, so you are saying an informal and a formal process are involved here.

Meredith: Informal; pretty informal.

Trish: Okay.

Meredith: Anecdotal kind of things.

Trish: Okay.

Meredith: Um...now, having said that with the academics I don't see that very much because I don't work this child.

Trish: Okay.

Meredith: But...I do ask questions at certain time of the year and say "How are you coming along with that?"

Trish: Right. In your opinion, has the child progressed with the second goal, being able to read more sight words.

Meredith: Um... Yes I think they said she is coming along with the PWIM words. If I recall correctly, as well as the rest of the class, but I could be off base with that.

Trish: Okay.

Meredith: And I don't know about the counting at all.

Trish: Okay. Can you define "PWIM Words"?

Meredith: Picture Word Induction Model words.

Trish: Okay. Thanks. Alright, so, based on your other answer I'll skip 3b and c So, I don't need to concern you about that, um...oh, actually, how did you come to that conclusion; if I recall correctly, you said informal conversation. I apologize. Are there team members that may disagree on this particular answer.

Meredith: No.

Trish: Okay. In your opinion, and I won't bug you about the third goal. We won't even go there. So, number 5. Thinking back to the September and March PPP meetings did any of the PPP team members experience challenges in participating in the conversations pertaining to the design of the SMART goals and/or rubrics?

Meredith: Umm...well, it's always a challenge to get the umm...the base line information for me because I don't work with the child. So, I have to do a lot of questioning. Um...it's hard to include to involve the EA because she is very busy with many things...lunch supervision. She has very little time free. Um...it's still a challenge for me to come up with the SMART goals. Of course, the teachers don't have much experience with that at all. I should say the teacher. No one had challenges participating in the conversation. Everybody's willing and open.

Trish: You used an interesting phrase: "Base-line information." Can you define that phrase for me?

Meredith: The current level of performance.

Trish: Okay. Alright. You also mentioned that the EA that worked with this particular student has difficulty finding the time to meet. Researchers often refer to that as interferences of collaboration. A lack of time. Can you think of any other interferences or barriers that may interfere with your time with this particular PPP team?

Meredith: No.

Trish: So, mainly just a lack of time.

Meredith: Yup.

Trish: And is that just for a particular professional or would you consider that a challenge for all the members of your team: finding the time to sit down together?

Meredith: Yes. All of us.

Trish: Okay.

Meredith: I guess another barrier would be is that I don't think the classroom teacher has much background in writing SMART goals. So, I pretty much have to take the initiative to do that.

Trish: Okay and um...you said "little experience"; what experience has that particular teacher had [with writing SMART goals] do you think?

Meredith: I don't know. I don't think she would have had any training, but I haven't asked her.

Trish: Okay. I really liked your use of the word *open conversation*. Can you define it and can you tell me what you think has a built that particular sort of atmosphere that you can have an open conversation with that team?

Meredith: Well, I have worked with the EA the whole time that I have been here so we know each other fairly well. The classroom teacher is new this year but I just make it a point to talk freely with the teachers because I have to for the kids. It depends on their instruction depends on us being able to discuss their programming openly.

Trish: Right. I often use that particular word *freely* to describe conversations that occur during PPP meetings but I'm wondering what do you think or what characteristics define a *free conversation*.

Meredith: Hmm...Um...people are not afraid to speak their mind. Being somewhat tactful which is very tactful for me. It is particularly difficult when you do not know the person very well.

Trish: A student that you referring to or....?

Meredith: No, teacher.

Trish: Okay, okay.

Meredith: And I think this particular teacher and I are quite similar and which sometimes seems like there is sometimes friction I'm never quite sure if she is annoyed with me or not.

Trish: So are you saying that the relationship or emotional background that you have with a person maybe a barrier?

Meredith: Oh, absolutely.

Trish: Yeah?

Meredith: But you just have to push through that and do the best you can do.

Trish: Okay, that's what you meant by *tactfully*?

Meredith: Yup.

Trish: So, you have mentioned the EA and the teacher. By, any chance, is the parent involved at this point or any point of the PPP process?

Meredith: You know, last year the parent has been involved with this school from the get go. I can't even recall if I have met the parents. The teachers just phone the parents and invite them and the parents say "No, don't worry. Just send the PPP and we'll sign it.."

Trish: And do you do that, the same process, for September March and June or is there just a particular month that you do that?

Meredith: Nope and if they ever did come in last year the grade one teacher would have done that without me. [Lois becomes distracted at this point and must tend to a student during the lunch hour.] Where were we?

Trish: Question number 5. You were clarifying for me the idea of open conversation and free conversation and you mentioned that a barrier is sometimes the relationship between the EA and yourself as well as the teacher and yourself and you explained to me how parents are invited to participate in PPP meetings at your school.

Meredith: Right.

Trish: Okay?

Meredith: Yup.

Trish: This is why I write things down; I'm such a visual person. Anyhow, this concludes our first conversation. If you were in my shoes, are there any questions that you would ask me?

Meredith: I just want to know who else is doing it?

Trish: I apologize but I can't help you. Alright, then if you are comfortable I would like to push stop on the recorder?

Meredith: Mm hm.

Trish: Okay. [After the recorder had been stopped, Meredith asked the researcher to start the recorder again so that she could add to what she had previously said.]

Meredith: Do you want me to repeat what I said before?

Trish: Yes.

Meredith: Okay, I was just talking about the hoop jumping that resource teachers, classroom teachers and EAs have to do for Sask Ed. [Saskatchewan Ministry of Education], but on the other hand, it really quantifies down to the nitty gritty what the students are doing and have achieved and it works to making the teachers especially more accountable for their PPP kids because in the past I think, and I think it still happens a lot, and it's stuffed in a drawer and it's not looked at again until review times. And there is very little a resource teacher can do about that. You know it's happening, but you can't seem to be able to change it because the teachers have the whole rest of the class to deal with so they tend to think of the PPP kids as kind of the resource teachers job, at least in paper work stuff.

Trish: Okay. You mention that you feel, and I think I'm paraphrasing you, you feel that something is stopping you from making sure all of the goals are achieved or that the teacher feels more accountable.

Meredith: Sure.

Trish: Do you feel that there are any resources that you are lacking that could assist you with achieving that particular goal?

Meredith: Time.

Trish: Yeah?

Meredith: Time to be in the class from time to time and I just don't get to that particular classroom.

Trish: What would time enable you to do? Let's say that I could give you however much time you wanted; what would you do then?

Meredith: Umm....I would be able to be in the classroom at times.

Trish: Okay.

Meredith: And perhaps, work with the child once per week if I had the time. I don't choose to work with that particular child because I feel that EA knows the child and can get the best possible out of her that she can. I bow to her expertise.

Trish: You seem to really understand the abilities and particular skills of your team members. What do think enables you to do that?

Meredith: Oh, I'm just a highly intuitive person.

Trish: I'm glad that we've got that on record! You do realize that this is being transcribed?

Meredith [Laughs] What was the question?

Trish: Well, you had me push record again because you wanted to comment [what you referred to as] on the amount of hoop jumping and paper pushing.

Meredith: Yeah, that's right.

Trish: And you related that to the lack of time.

Meredith: Yeah, yeah. But, that didn't lead us to the intuition comment. What was that question.

Trish: That particular question ...yes, I made the observation that you able to recognize the abilities and skills of you team members and I was just wondering how you do that?

Meredith: I'm nosy and pushy, more than intuitive.

Trish: And that could be related to open conversations, right?

Meredith: yeah, I'm always poking my nose into the classroom for whatever reason and asking them questions and watching them on the playground.

Trish: Are there any other comments that you would like to make? It could be related to this particular conversation or any of the other questions that we've discussed.

Meredith: I don't know; you're doing an awfully good job at dragging things out of me. It's like talking to my doctor; when I say I don't have anything to say and she pulls out half an hour's worth of information.

Trish: With your permission I would like to push *stop*.

Meredith: Yup.

Trish: Thank you.

## APPENDIX H

### Meredith Interview Two

Trish: Okay, question 1a: What adjective do you think best describes how you feel about the June PPP meeting?

Meredith: Excellent...and I feel that way because the teacher brought the EA which was a surprise to me, um, so we were able to get both of their points of view, which was good.

Trish: Did the parents attend?

Meredith: No. They choose not to.

Trish: Okay. What adjective do you think best describes the effectiveness of that particular meeting.

Meredith: Also excellent and that is because we got two PPPs done in 45 minutes and, uh...

Trish: Oh, wow!

Meredith: ...we determined that there was a little bit of testing that still needed to be done on this particular student that I would do and the EA was also going to um, do a double check on a couple of things, as well finalize the rubric that goes with the PPP. So, we each went away with some little jobs before we finalize it.

Trish: Okay. May I ask if the assessments you mentioned are related to any of the goals that you chose to focus on for this study?

Meredith: For your study?

Trish: Yeah.

Meredith: Yes.

Trish: Okay.

Meredith: The rubrics are for the SMART goals.

Trish: Oh, yes.

Meredith: Yeah. That where, um, no they weren't all academic; one was coming in from recess.

Trish: And one was fluency reading. Am I correct? Or did they have to do with sight words?

Meredith: Um, sight words? Yeah.

Trish: Counting to twenty?

Meredith: Yes.

Trish: Okay. So, just out of curiosity sake, which assessment do you prefer as a resource room teacher?

Meredith: Oh, um, well it depends on the age. For this age?

Trish: Yeah.

Meredith: Well, Cassidy is doing everything that the other kids are doing, so I'd do the PM benchmark and um, I have an informal phonemic test by Abby Rajani that follows the um flow chart that I use and I usually the letter names and sounds from Marie Claire's not Marie Claire...Marie Clay's survey and the Dolch sight words.

Trish: Okay, cool. So, basically that answers my question on how you came to that conclusion. Is there anything you would like to add for 2b?

Meredith: Just that everyone was on the same page and we quickly got through everything and um, so how well we had done.

Trish: How...

Meredith: Everyone was able speak freely.

Trish: Oh, okay. So, when you were describing what you'd refer to as an *excellent PPP meeting* some of the things I hear were: freedom to speak what was on your mind; also, that everyone was on the same page; you also commented that it was a very productive meeting in the sense that everyone left knowing what their responsibilities were and such; you also referred to time. Do you consider the amount of time to be one of the indicators of a successful PPP meeting? For example, the shorter the amount of time a meeting takes...

Meredith: [Chuckles] No, not really.

Trish: No?

Meredith: No, because, um, some meetings will take more time than others, but this meeting was done very expediently.

Trish: Okay. Were you concerned whether any of the PPP team members were having difficulty following the conversation during any part of the meeting?

Meredith: No, not at all, because I had the PPP on the computer screen while we were going through it and I was typing what they were saying and they could see what I was typing and what were we saying. That's 3b.

Trish: That's 3b?

Meredith: Mm hm.

Trish: So, do you find that providing a visual aide really helps with making things clear.

Meredith: I think so.

Trish: Okay.

Meredith: Most teachers are pretty visual.

Trish: Mm hm. What steps, if any, were taken to ensure that all members understood the topics discussed during the PPP meeting?

Meredith: Well, I would say having the PPP right there on the computer and I also had a hard copy seeing that there were three of us, so that they could check back to that too. I guess that would be it.

Trish: Can you paint a mental picture for me for what the communication was like during that particular moment, for that meeting?

Meredith: Really good. Um, couldn't have been better.

Trish: So, what defines really good communication, for you?

Meredith: Well, we all shared our ideas and we discussed how it was going and if I needed any clarification I would ask questions. They would answer them.

Trish: Do you find that your team members will ask questions of you also to clarify?

Meredith: Well, not so much because it is more me trying to get the information about Cassidy because I don't work with her.

Trish: When it comes to the actual typing of the PPP who does the most of the typing in this particular school.

Meredith: Um, I would say most often me.

Trish: Okay. Unless you have any other comments to make I would like to move on to number 4?

Meredith: Mm hm.

Trish: Are there any PPP team members that may disagree with your opinion that you described to me?

Meredith: I wouldn't think so. Um, they seemed to go away being quite happy with the process.

Trish: How are you interpreting that sense of happiness? What kind of cues were they giving you?

Meredith: Well, the EA was um, quite willing and able and actually suggested herself to double check the rubrics.

Trish: Okay. In your opinion, has the child progressed with....and actually I am going to modify question 5a...with any of the goals?

Meredith: Um, yes. I am just going to take a peek here to refresh my memory. Um one of them was reading 40 sight words 4 out of 5 times without assistance and those are the pre-primer words.

Trish: Yeah? And how is she doing?

Meredith: She is reading 40 out of 40 and is working on 15 of the primer and she knows 10 of them.

Trish: Good for her!

Meredith: So, better than expected.

Trish: She has really been working hard, hasn't she?

Meredith: She is an educable Down Syndrome kid. She will learn to read.

Trish: She must have a good work ethic?

Meredith: No, no she doesn't. She will do nothing if she is left on her own. She is very much a one-on-one kind of gal.

Trish: Okay, okay. So, how did she, oh, how did she do with the other two goals.

Meredith: Um, counting to 20, 4 out of 5 times. She always skips 15...always! [Laughs]

Trish: So, is that mainly based on observation or do they keep a running record of sorts with that?

Meredith: I don't know. They don't need to write it down because they know she always does it.

Trish: Yeah.

Meredith: Even if they remind her when she comes up to 15. [Laughs] Um, and what was the third one? The third one coming in...coming in to the school, right?

Trish: Yeah.

Meredith: Where was that? Um, oh, they put *Goal mastered*. In the cold weather it was greatly improved because she didn't mind coming in, but now that the weather is nicer uh, she sometimes needs reminders.

Trish: Okay.

Meredith: But, uh, pretty much it was 12 times out of 20 over three weeks. So, we think she pretty much has achieved that goal.

Trish: Okay. So, 5b reads how did you come to that conclusion. You've already answered a portion of that question. So for example, if I'm correct, the first goal, which referred to her sight words...acquisition of sight words...it was mainly based on assessment, am I correct?

Meredith: Yes.

Trish: Those were the assessments that you were referring to?

Meredith: Mm hm.

Trish: Also, for the second one you referred to, if I recall correctly, the child's ability to count to 20 and she quite often, or repeatedly, skip um, 15 and you thought that was based on observation, am I correct?

Meredith: [Nods yes]

Trish: Okay, and third, which was coming in, how did you come to that conclusion.

Meredith: The teacher and EA um, also based that on observation. I think they were going to...one of the things they went away with they were going to empirically check it over a week.

Trish: Okay. Um, so moving onto 5c. Are there PPP team members that you believe will not agree with the opinion that you gave me.

Meredith: No.

Trish: No?

Meredith: Because they observed them and...yeah.

Trish: Number 6: If you had the chance to change any element of that PPP meeting, what would it be and why?

Meredith: Um, probably just more time so that we didn't feel so rushed.

Trish: Okay.

Meredith: I can't think of anything else. I've worked with that EA for a number of years and I trust her opinions and observations.

Trish: So, you had um, I think the words you used were "...squeezed two PPP meetings into 45 minutes." Was that because it was going so quickly or had you scheduled those two PPPs for 45 minutes?

Meredith: Both. [Laughs] We had 45 minutes to work with.

Trish: Kay.

Meredith: It turned out the other PPP you could take...this is off the record.

Trish: Okay. [Turns off the recorder]

Meredith: [Gives interviewer permission to turn recorder back on]

Trish: Well, that concludes my portion of the interview meaning that I have no more questions to add. Would you like to add any comments or omit any comments that you previously made during this interview?

Meredith: No, I don't think so. Except, do you want another carrot? [Laughs]

Trish: Awesome! May I please push *stop* then?

Meredith: Yes, you may.

Trish: Thank you.

## APPENDIX I

### Meredith Interview Three

Trish: Okay, question 1a: What adjective do you think best describes how you feel about the June PPP meeting?

Meredith: Excellent...and I feel that way because the teacher brought the EA which was a surprise to me, um, so we were able to get both of their points of view, which was good.

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Trish: She has really been working hard, hasn't she?

Meredith: She is an educable Down Syndrome kid. She will learn to read.

Trish: She must have a good work ethic?

Meredith: No, no she doesn't. She will do nothing if she is left on her own. She is very much a one-on-one kind of gal.

Trish: Okay, okay. So, how did she, oh, how did she do with the other two goals.

Meredith: Um, counting to 20, 4 out of 5 times. She always skips 15...always! [Laughs]

Trish: So, is that mainly based on observation or do they keep a running record of sorts with that?

Meredith: I don't know. They don't need to write it down because they know she always does it.

Trish: Yeah.

Meredith: Even if they remind her when she comes up to 15. [Laughs] Um, and what was the third one? The third one coming in...coming in to the school, right?

Trish: Yeah.

Meredith: Where was that? Um, oh, they put *Goal mastered*. In the cold weather it was greatly improved because she didn't mind coming in, but now that the weather is nicer uh, she sometimes needs reminders.

Trish: Okay.

Meredith: But, uh, pretty much it was 12 times out of 20 over three weeks. So, we think she pretty much has achieved that goal.

Trish: Okay. So, 5b reads how did you come to that conclusion. You've already answered a portion of that question. So for example, if I'm correct, the first goal, which referred to her sight words...acquisition of sight words...it was mainly based on assessment, am I correct?

Meredith: Yes.

Trish: Those were the assessments that you were referring to?

Meredith: Mm hm.

Trish: Also, for the second one you referred to, if I recall correctly, the child's ability to count to 20 and she quite often, or repeatedly, skip um, 15 and you thought that was based on observation, am I correct?

Meredith: [Nods yes]

Trish: Okay, and third, which was coming in, how did you come to that conclusion.

Meredith: The teacher and EA um, also based that on observation. I think they were going to...one of the things they went away with they were going to empirically check it over a week.

Trish: Okay. Um, so moving onto 5c. Are there PPP team members that you believe will not agree with the opinion that you gave me.

Meredith: No.

Trish: No?

Meredith: Because they observed them and...yeah.

Trish: Number 6: If you had the chance to change any element of that PPP meeting, what would it be and why?

Meredith: Um, probably just more time so that we didn't feel so rushed.

Trish: Okay.

Meredith: I can't think of anything else. I've worked with that EA for a number of years and I trust her opinions and observations.

Trish: So, you had um, I think the words you used were "...squeezed two PPP meetings into 45 minutes." Was that because it was going so quickly or had you scheduled those two PPPs for 45 minutes?

Meredith: Both. [Laughs] We had 45 minutes to work with.

Trish: Kay.

Meredith: It turned out the other PPP you could take...this is off the record.

Trish: Okay. [Turns off the recorder]

Meredith: [Gives interviewer permission to turn recorder back on]

Trish: Well, that concludes my portion of the interview meaning that I have no more questions to add. Would you like to add any comments or omit any comments that you previously made during this interview?

Meredith: No, I don't think so. Except, do you want another carrot? [Laughs]

Trish: Awesome! May I please push *stop* then?

Meredith: Yes, you may.

Trish: Thank you.

## APPENDIX J

### Nicole Interview One

Trish: Okay, so I'll start with the first question, 1a: Which three SMART goals have you chosen to focus upon for this study and what PPP domains does each goal pertain to? And I'll just be jotting down some of these answers down because I am a visual learner.

Nicole: I guess the first one that I have chosen is, um, falls into the categories Independence/Problem Solving/ Work Habits and it has to do with the child keeping, um, his hands to himself. The second one: Independence/Problem solving/ Work Habits and it has to do with work skills; being able to follow a schedule without one-on-one attention to do that. This child is able to read, so it does not have to be a visual schedule as such, but it does have to be on the board. Because he can read, that will be his visual schedule or the classroom's schedule. The last one falls under safety because this child does have autism. So, I don't think they will be surprising. They have been designed as two, but I think they can fall into one. Umm, the child being able to verbally identify the dangers of fire and electricity.

Trish: Okay. May I ask what grade the child's in?

Nicolet: He is in grade 7.

Trish: Okay. Why did you choose those particular goals?

Nicole: In my view, independence, safety, and work habits are what going to help him be successful in life

Trish: In your opinion, has the child progressed with the first goal, which you stated was under the Independence/Problem Solving/Work Habits domain; keeping his hands to himself. Do you feel he has progressed with that particular goal?

Nicole: Um, he has made significant gains and having worked with this child for a number of years I can tell you that this is an ongoing thing with him. So, it's something that we have had to monitor over the years. Um, he is improving significantly and is keeping his hands to himself and [he] is understanding personal space. His difficulty with hands on, etc., tends to happen mostly in structured activities and when he gets excited.

Trish: Okay. How did you come to that conclusion? So, what sort of information do you base your answer on?

Nicole: My observation of the child, um, whether he is in the class, hallway, or when he is outside and I am on supervision. Um, in the PPP process the, um, contributing members, teacher and EA, will also contribute their thoughts. My other reason to believe this is that as having the role of, um, administrator his name has not been brought to the office.

Trish: Well, that's interesting. So, speaking as an administrator and as a resource room teacher, at this moment, would you say so for that all of the information you have shared with me has been based on anecdotal records, observation, or a combination of both?

Nicole: Both.

Trish: Kay. Prior to the PPP meeting, do you find that any formal or informal conversation occurs between you and any members of the PPP team or do you find that it's mainly formal within the PPP process?

Nicole: Umm, I do believe that the PPP is a living and breathing document. It is not written at one time and then left.

Trish: Mm hm.

Nicole: As much as this child is an intensive supports student and resource room teachers are not, technically, to have much responsibility for them; I have frequent contact with them weekly and/or daily, depending on the child's needs and in the case of this child it is sometimes daily and sometimes weekly, in terms of helping to plan for that child and helping to, um, find, um, find visual strategies, social stories, whatever may need to be put into place. So, the communication between, regarding the goals is ongoing throughout the year.

Trish: Okay. You used a phrase, which I often hear used, what I would refer to as, resource teaching circles, you used the phrase *living and breathing document* to describe the PPP. Can you define what that phrase means to you?

Nicole: To me, that phrase means the document is not written at one fixed point in time, but we are constantly changing it because the child is constantly changing and so we can add and change, delete goals, um, enhance them depending on the needs of the child.

Trish: Kay. Does that deletion of the goals that you mentioned... do you find, in your experience as a resource room teacher, do you find that it occurs on the scheduled PPP times, for example September, approximately March, approximately June; do you find that those changes occur then or do you feel free enough as a resource room teacher to make those changes at any point in the year?

Nicole: Um, I feel confident...and... enough at any point in the year. I think too it often depends on the child and what is happening in that child's life. Um, if I'm going to stick to this child in particular, um, let's say if the occupational therapist came out, or the speech and language, um, pathologist did an assessment we would certainly be adding to the PPP at those given times.

Trish: Kay.

Nicole: Also, if the child made a significant progression or regression we would change it at those times. I think it really does depend upon the needs of that child and sometimes on the observations of the classroom teacher and/or myself.

Trish: Okay. Thank you for sharing and I was just wondering when those changes are made do you call for a formal meeting; so, let's say it happened in December

Nicole: Mm hm.

Trish: ...would you make a formal meeting for that or would that happen on a more informal basis?

Nicole: If the formal meeting that you are referring to means a sit down with the parents

Trish: Yes.

Nicole: ...um, the classroom teacher, myself, and, possibly, the educational assistant, then I would say that it is more informal um, it would, probably, involve a sit down with the classroom teacher and I to formulate it. Because the document goes home at specific intervals um, I don't feel it necessary. I may phone the parents to make them aware of a significant gain or loss and my try to find out if there is anything happening at home that may be responsible or a factor in, but I would type it up and the parents can veto it at that time, but I would never make a significant change without parental input, but in terms of goals for the needs of the children with the meetings the parents agree with us. We are in this in the best for the child and we have good faith, um, I am going to call it a process here- that we all trust each other and have our best interest in mind for the child.

Trish: So, you spoke of the PPP team members and I would like to know which PPP team members, and please know I would like to know the roles of those individuals, for example I would like you to say *EA* as opposed to someone's name. Who do you expect to be in attendance for the June PPP meeting for this particular student?

Nicole: Um, for this student it will be, uh, the mom and/or dad, it's always the mom. I've never had just the dad, but the dad is often present. Uh, the teacher is present, in this case, I cannot say whether the EA will be present or not---it is possible. We have difficulty having EAs in attendance if they are not during work hours

Trish: I see.

Nicole: ...because if an EA is in attendance up to or above their work hours they need to be paid or given time in lieu and most schools do not have a lot of flexibility in that area.

Trish: Are there any PPP team members that you believe may disagree with your opinion on the progress with that particular goal?

Nicole: No.

Trish: Kay. May I ask why you were able to state your opinion in such a clear manner?

Nicole: Um, because I have frequent communication with the parents, the teacher, and the EA Um, it is frequent and ongoing.

Trish: Kay. Thank you. You had stated that the second goal pertained to the Independence/ Problem Solving/ Work Skills domain Um, in particular, you wanted the child to be able to follow a visual schedule on his own without assistance. In your opinion, has the child progressed with that particular goal?

Nicole: Um, because the child---of the child's diagnosis it is very difficult for him to move beyond himself, in that where he is functioning in his own mind is where he stays. Um, he--- with verbal prompts he will follow the visual schedule.

Trish: Kay. What information are you basing your answer on?

Nicole: Again, communication with the teacher, EA, and observations within the class setting.

Trish: I know that sometimes the questions seem a little repetitive; I'm sorry.

Nicole: No, that's alright.

Trish: Thanks for your patience. When you say *observation* are you referring to your own in the classroom?

Nicole: Yes.

Trish: During what part of the day are you able to make these observations?

Nicole: They're impromptu observations. Um, anytime that I have anything called *prep time* or any time that I am moving between classrooms I will peek into any given classrooms; I have that relationship and permission of the teachers that I can sit down at any given time. So, that's what I will do.

Trish: Okay. 3c: Are there any PPP team members that you believe may disagree with your opinion that you just stated?

Nicole: No.

Trish: Kay. Now, in the first question that I asked you stated that the third goal that you would like to focus on was in the safety domain. Specifically, you would like him to verbally identify dangerous situations involving fire and, um, electricity. I am paraphrasing, I realize. So, in your opinion, has the child progressed with that particular goal?

Nicole: Um, when asked questions the child is able to state the dangers of each.

Trish: So, in your opinion there has been some progress?

Nicole: Yes, um, the challenge with this, because it is safety within the home, we want the goal to be met 100% of the time, and, again, due to the child's diagnosis, um, he often, with this diagnosis, and this child in particular, um, he does not often see consequences to his behavior. He is not able to see that if he puts the fork into the light socket that there could be danger in that and he has been known to burn himself at home. And when, uh, asked he kind of looks like no, but Mom has no real sense that he would never do that again.

Trish: How did you come that conclusion? In other words, what information do you base your answer on?

Nicole: Um, discussion with the parents, teacher, and the EA.

Trish: Do you feel that this goal was an easy one to monitor within the school environment?

Nicole: Um, I think that it is the easy one to teach to because both of these can be fitted under health or lifestyles as well as they could be um, covered under the science curriculum in some manner. In terms of, um, and also, this class happened to go on an overnight camping trip and there was a fire present. So, in that sense, yes, but no, I think, for the school setting, when it comes to things like fire and electricity we need to know that the child is attracted to those sort of things and monitor it because it could dangerous to the building, um, if the child decided to start a fire because the children in the building we need them to understand the importance of the fire drill.

Trish: Do you find that you depend on a particular team member's opinion more than other team members for certain goals? For example, you pay attention or may value the opinion of the EA over other team members for a certain goal and then maybe for another goal, such as this particular goal, you may focus on the parents' opinion or do you find you try to provide everyone with an equal opportunity or equal value to everyone's opinion or amount?

Nicole: I would like to say that I would value everyone's opinion equally.

Trish: Mm hm.

Nicole: I think that depending on the goal you need to look at the person who is working the most often with the child during those situations. So, due to, um, that contact with the child that may increase that person's weight in terms of answering a question.

Trish: Okay. Now, do you feel that there will be any team members, that you believe, may disagree with your opinion? With your particular answer?

Nicole: Um, I don't believe so.

Trish: Kay. You did not seem to, um, be as confident with your answer as you were with the others. May I ask why?

Nicole: Um, just as one of your questions eluded to that it is sometimes difficult to always judge these things and even though this child can verbally respond to questions and, intellectually, understand these dangers, um, how is functioning in a real-life situation and people, that were perhaps camping with him, um mom and dad, who were with him all of the time may have a different view.

Trish: Okay, number 5: Thinking back to the September and March PPP meetings did any of the PPP team members experience challenges participating in the conversations pertaining to the design of the SMART goals and/or rubrics?

Nicole: No, um, I think that the way the PPP is, um, laid out some of it is very much school centered and I would term that in the academic areas and see, as the professionals in that area, um, that the parents----I see the parents' role as listening and trying to understanding and asking clarification questions and would not expect or encourage or perhaps accept academic goals outlined by the parent.

Trish: Interesting, Now, during our conversation you stated a few very interesting comments that I require clarification on. You had mentioned that, on occasion, you have found that the PPP process can, um, sometimes be a bit of a challenge, especially, when involving all the team members. For example, you mentioned that, sometimes, it can be difficult to involve the EA because of the in lieu problem, right?

Nicole: Or extra pay.

Trish: Yes, thanks. That's something that the researchers refer to barriers of collaboration—something that interferes--- and a common theme is money and that would be related to that. Are there any other barriers that you find to be quite challenging as a resource room teacher?

Nicole: Um, I find very challenging to bring outside agencies to the table. As much as I know that it is mandated by the provincial government, the Ministry of Education, that outside agencies be involved that is not always successful in my experience. Um, as much having, let's say, a physio or O.T. or SLP that is hired by the parents to do private sessions for the child and the parent is in the position to pay the specialist to be at the meetings that is much more likely to happen. But, if we, ourselves, ask for the occupational therapist to consult, um, that would mean that we would have to pay them and then that money actually means that that person would not then spend time---would not possibly spend time with students and I am not prepared to do that for a PPP.

Trish: Kay. Something else that you had also mentioned was---you kind of eluded to the idea that coming into a PPP process, different team members have different levels and different sorts or different types of expertise.

Nicole: Yes.

Trish: Do you find that ever to be a barrier?

Nicole: No, I only find that enriching.

Trish: Enriching how?

Nicole: Um, I don't believe that we, uh, a child, a child's progress---anything is not one dimensional.

Trish: Mmhmm.

Nicole: ...and I think, you know, I think sometimes some of us may have blinders on and see a child in a certain way or certain goals as really necessary. I think, as we have, speech and language paths, we have OTs, we have counselors, um, parents, EAs, administrators---whatever the case maybe, um, people from Child and Youth, a psychiatrist present---they all have different views so that we can, hopefully, put the pieces together---much like a puzzle---and with all of that information then decide what's important and what is feasible for a school to do.

Trish: Now that this concludes the formal questions that I wanted to ask, now I am going to give you the chance to go back to any of the questions or any of the conversations that we had while the recorder was on and would you like to add to any of your answers or would you like to modify any of your answers?

Nicole: Um, no I don't have anything, I believe, to modify or add, um, I think I would just want to reiterate that, um, as we look over the Personal Program Plans it is very important that we realize that this can change and that, um, if something isn't moving we need to look at why is this skills not changing and is it really important if it is not changing? So, I think we need to give ourselves permission to change and give ourselves permission to ask for more information from whoever that may be or is need from.

Trish: You had described the PPP as a living and breathing document; would you use that particular phrase to also describe the outcome sampling rubric that we are asked to complete?

Nicole: No.

Trish: May I ask why you say that?

Nicole: I think the rubric is written, um, at the beginning of the school year and as much as there are five points along the rubric that rubric does no---you cannot go back and change that rubric; you just have to score yourself and I feel that it is scoring how good of a guesser am I with how this child is going to progress and mark myself at the end of that rubric in terms of how the child did in terms of my best educated guess. Whereas, if I feel that we started out on a wrong road in the Personal Program Plan; there were some goals that we are finding aren't necessary or other things that are surfacing that are more important, um, in terms of safety, etc, we can go back and change the Personal Program Plan whereas I don't think it is so with the rubric.

Trish: Rubrics, when [for] any sort of rubric, the purpose is evaluation. What do you think is the outcome rubric evaluating in this particular case?

Nicole: I think in any case it is evaluating the person's, who wrote it, best guess on the child. So, I believe it's evaluating how accurate the person, who is working--- or peripherally working--- with the child, how well they can guess where the child will be and we all see that we need to set out for an ideal; we need to have an idea of what our ideal classroom is; we need an ideal of where we want this child to go and if we look at a MAPS meeting we need to keep in mind dreams because that's what we want for every child. We, also, need to be cognoscente that there are road blocks along the way or that we don't necessarily see that our path changes and, sometimes, our dream changes; it may change for the better, maybe it will be a grieving process.

Trish: Okay. Thank you for your answers. Last, but not least, if our roles were reversed and I was the interviewee and you were the interviewer are there any questions that you believe that you should ask?

Nicole: My understanding of where these questions are going is that, um, how do I see the Personal Program Plan, um, facilitate interaction between different stakeholders. Um, I do not feel that it does not necessary facilitate or stands in the way of that progress or that interaction. I think that where the Personal Program Plan steps in terms of facilitating that interaction between others is that those who are not involving the parents anyway. Anyone who sees the school functioning in isolation would not feel the need to reach out. Anyone who recognizes that a child's school life is only part of their school life recognizes they need to reach out and, perhaps, as I am chatting I am thinking that, perhaps, this too: that we recognize that there are times when there are parents who see the school as a threatening and intimidating place to be. So, if they have to come to formalized meetings, in some way, that may be frightening and, in other ways, it might be helpful to them to realize that we are asking them questions and inviting them. We need them in this process and so that might---I am at a lost for the word right now, but it might be---empowering for them too.

Trish: Now, you did use the word *formality*; do you believe that the inclusion of SMART goals and rubric sampling adds to the formal nature of the PPP meeting or do feel that it makes it more welcoming---if I can use that particular term---to individuals such as the classroom teacher, the EA and the parent?

Nicole: I am finding that parents and teachers are becoming more familiar with SMART goals, um, they are finding that they are not as intimidating. I don't get as many laughs when I ask "What do you think? Is this going to be 2 out of 4 or 3 out of 4? And that we can't we use 5 out of 5 unless it is a safety issue. They're becoming comfortable with that and they're not laughing. Um, I think that, uh, it's---I understand why these goal changes have been made. I think it is important that we're accountable to the Ministry; accountable to the parents; accountable to the child; and accountable to each other. Um, I think it's just something that can be challenging because in any child's life I will go back to the road is not always smooth; if there's a family break-up; if there's a change in meds; if there is a new diagnosis---there is all sorts of things that can impede a child's progress and then you go back and you score the SMART goals and you feel that you did not do very well and yet, you can't---there's not necessarily a place to say "Yeah, but..." and is there a place for *buts* in this?

Trish: You mentioned that these particular goals can assist us to be accountable to each other. Who were you referring to when you say *each other*?

Nicole: Well, I think if you sit down and you are doing this as a partnership, um, and I am thinking of the educational team in much of this---I can see the parents being involved in some of them---um, but we are all stakeholders in this---the success of the child--- and so, I think it is always important we all know where we are headed because, again, the saying “You don’t know where you’re going, how are you going to know when you get there?”

Trish: Thank you so much for being so open with your answers. This concludes my questioning. Are there any other comments that you would like to make?

Nicole: Thank you.

Trish: May I please have your permission to stop recording?

Nicole: Good night [laughs].

## APPENDIX K

### Nicole Interview Two

Nicole: I think, um, the adjectives that I would use are probably, um, cooperative and, um, I felt it was a...it was kind of a good team building...I felt that we were a team.

Trish: Why do you think you felt that way?

Nicole: Well, everyone seemed---their body language and their facial expression, um, all demonstrated that they were relaxed. They, um, everyone appeared to contribute when they needed to. As much as I looked at the group and asked to the teacher: "Do you have something to add?" or to the parent or "Do you agree with this?" Um, I found that the teacher and the parent appeared to feel quite comfortable interrupting and saying different things that they had seen. So, to me everyone was in there feeling, I think, like an equal. I certainly hope so and... and putting in what they needed.

Trish: Um, let's see. What adjective do you think best describes the effectiveness of that particular PPP meeting?

Nicole: I don't know about an adjective, but perhaps a verb.

Trish: Okay.

Nicole: Bringing things to closure. I find that the June PPP is challenging in terms of as much as it is meant to bring things to closure, it is awfully hard to not to look into next year and where we need to go with that.

Trish: How did you come to that conclusion?

Nicole: Just by what happened in the meeting. We had an Ed. Psych assessment and it helped to decide what, you know, we were going to leave out next year and, um, as much as the goals were written in September or October, the Ed. Psych. Assessment came later and therefore, you now, some of where we were going was really void.

Trish: Did you have that Ed. Psych. Meeting recently?

Nicole: Um, approximately two months ago.

Trish: Was the Ed. Psych. Involved, strictly, in that meeting or did he or she attend the PP meeting?

Nicole: Only the sharing of the results of the assessment.

Trish: 3a: Were you concerned about any of the PPP team members were having difficulty following the conversation during any portion of the meeting.

Nicole: No.

Trish: In your opinion why did the meeting go so smoothly.

Nicole: I think, again, this parent is in and out of the school. She is in contact with the teacher as well as myself. I have worked with this child for a number of years. Um, the parent is very happy with the amount of inclusion her child has been able to reach this year. And the teacher does a wonderful job of finding ways to include children who learn differently or who function in a very different level than the grade being taught.

Trish: You mentioned that this particular parent is quite involved with the school.

Nicole: In the younger years, much more so. She has a job, etc. But, she...it's certainly not uncommon to see her.

Trish: Kay. Do you think that has an effect on a parent's ability to be involved in the PPP meeting?

Nicole: I think it's the...what helps the parent to be involved in the PPP meeting is the level of comfort with the staff that he or she is working with.

Trish: So, what information do you base your previous answer on.

Nicole: The ability to be comfortable?

Trish: Yeah.

Nicole: I think you can be in a building, but if there is no interaction how can you feel all that warm and inviting. Where, you know, she smiles when she sees us. There is an automatic hello from the teacher and/or EA and/or myself and/or the parent. Um, communication appears to flow freely and if the child is experiencing difficulty periodically, as this child does, everyone is concerned and is everyone is looking at what we can do for the child.. There has never been "Well you haven't done... and you don't support us... sort of thing." It's a very warm, I think, relationship.

Trish: Okay, with your permission I would like to go onto 3c: What steps if any were taken to ensure that all members understood the topics discussed during the PPP meeting?

Nicole: A lot of that happens when the PPP is set up during the Fall. Um, you always make sure that everyone has input and that it is discussed what is meant by where you are going. So, the PPP is a team project. Again, as much as I want to reiterate what I said in the first meeting I do believe that the teachers set the goals for the academics, but the parents always has a role to play.

Trish: Are there PPP team members that you believe may disagree with your opinion that you stated?

Nicole: I don't believe so, no in any major way. They may use different ways to express themselves. The teacher and I will often talk after a PPP and see how we felt it went. And uh, the parent and I will often talk often without the classroom teacher present to see how things went and everything seems to be, you know, I would be surprised if there was much difference.

Trish: That is a lot of conversation happening in a day. When do you get this all done?

Nicole: By the seat of your pants. That's what you do. You are constantly moving. I could tell you a story about what some little kid said to me. Um, but you are constantly making yourself available because that's your job.

Trish: In your opinion, has the child progressed with um, well, let's say with all of the goals?

Nicole: Yes, I am afraid to say yes and no. He's done a marvelous job at keeping his hands to himself in terms of the Safety/Work Habits/ Independence sort of goal. He's no more hands on that any other student at grade seven. Uh, the thing that surfaced the most for me was the issue of fire. Um, again, we know with a child with this diagnosis as I said before it is really hard them to internalize and see outward. Um, as much as he is very good at stating the dangers of fire and electricity he continues to demonstrate very unsafe behaviors in the home.

Trish: May I ask what sort of things that the parent had mentioned. I mean, what sort of things is he demonstrating in the home?

Nicole: Last week, um, in the c yard, he had torn off a piece of his shirt, he had some kindling (small pieces of wood) and he was rubbing to substances together to see if they'd start a fire.

Trish: Kay. Thank you for sharing. 5b: How did you come to that conclusion? I'm guessing based on the stories that the parent shared with you?

Nicole: Yes.

Trish: And you also mentioned---or you eluded to the idea--- of conversation?

Nicole: Yes.

Trish: Kay. Thank you. Are there PPP team members that you believe would disagree with your opinion about the goals---that there has been...

Nicole: I don't believe so, because everyone had input around the table um, because form the school setting the teacher and I were saying "Yes, he can verbalize but we don't have ----he's almost always in a structured setting here. Um, he doesn't really have an opportunity to start fires etc. um, so for in the school setting he hasn't played with electricity, but in the home setting

where, you now, just because of the home setting---it's just different um, the child is able to---let's say express himself in a different manner.

Trish: Okay. Are there PPP team members that you believe, oh, I apologize, I am repeating myself. If you had the chance to change any element of that particular PPP meeting---I am referring to the June PPP meeting. What would it be and why?

Nicole: It's been stated at the last resource room teacher's meeting that they're feeling that the June PPP meeting could/should also be the September PPP meeting and, in as much, historically, like I said, the June PPP automatically leans to September I think if it was kind of a stated expectation where you could have what you think could be next year's teacher because we know that staff personnel is constantly changing, but if we could have that kind of meeting to bring this to closure and look at next year with the curriculum and where you are going and this child is in grade eight so we've already planned on where he'll be going for high school. So, if we can look at more the skills needed for that setting I think that it would make for a much more intense meeting, whereas I find the June PPP meetings fairly quick and short because we're just looking at how---how it worked what came in---you know, how were our goals---what we do need to change.

Trish: Okay, thank you for, um, for your comments. During this conversation as well as during our previous conversation you often brought up the idea of *team, team members, team work*. What defines effective teamwork in your opinion?

Nicole: Um, everyone has a part to play in setting the goals ; everyone has a part in terms of making sure the goals are reached. We all have apart in choosing materials and using those teachable moments. Like, if we all know what the goals are, whether I am seeing this child in the hall or the teacher is teaching something in the classroom or the parent is at home. If we all know we're headed then we can all address it at different settings and hopefully help some transference.

Trish: That concludes my questions for today. Are there any comments that you would like to add or omit from our conversation today?

Nicole: Um, no. I think that's fine. Thank you.

Trish: Kay. Do I have your permission to stop recording?

Nicole: You certainly do.

## APPENDIX M

### Kate Interview One

Trish: Question 1a: Which of the three SMART goals have you chosen to focus upon for this study and what PPP domain does each goal pertain to?

Kate: Kay...I really should have....brought my PPPs. Um....can you reword it one more time?

Trish: Sure. [Kate makes a gesture to indicate she wants to read the question herself and Trish hands her a piece of paper with the question typed on it.]

Kate: [Reading from the paper ] Which of the three SMART goals have you chosen to focus upon for this study and what PPP domain does each goal pertain to? Kay. Okay, so, the learner we're talking about is a...has an identified Learning Disability.

Trish: Kay.

Kate: Okay, so, the domains are: academics and so, two are in academics that we'll talk about and the other one is actually in...I think we put it in *Other* and it had to do with hygiene.

Trish: You don't have to tell me the goals word by word, but can you give me the gist of each of the goals?

Kate: So, um, the one in other was we are just getting the student to identify, um, coming to school with clean clothes and her kept.

Trish: Mm hm and how about the academic?

Kate: Uh, the academic were to increase fluency and rate; is one of them. Because her comprehension is quite strong and the other one was to create a well written paragraph.

Trish: Why did you choose those particular goals?

Kate: Why did I choose them? Well, the other for the hygiene because she is going to Grade Eight. Kids will notice...are noticing that how she is kept; especially in our community, so that's why the first one was kept. That one, Trish, was identified until I came in March, okay?

Trish: Mm hm.

Kate: And...the other ones were partially carried over from the John Lake Learning Disabilities program.

Trish: Mm hm.

Kate: Where there was a really good solid PPP there and then just um, data that we had done. So, we had done the Fountess and Pinnell, um, when I started working with her last year we did the informal reading inventory, Afort Shanker...just that sort of thing to try to identify and of course the Grey Oral is for fluency. So, I guess those would be the reason we picked the fluency and rate; to increase that, um, and just her written work need a lot of work, so that would have been from, uh, classroom teachers' recommendations, because I don't think Karen had a lot of writing on her PPP that came over. Is that fair? Is that what you are looking for?

Trish: Thank you.

Kate: Yup.

Trish: In your opinion, has the child progressed with first goal (and you had mentioned the first goal was clean clothes and kept hair)?

Kate: Yup. So, we struggle with...clean clothes, yes. That one was easy to fix, actually. Um, some of the other things in just presentation are just a little more challenging because, I think, we are struggling with the idea that you have to fit within a certain...a certain look...or is it okay?---because she sort of has a wild, crazy um, naturally curly hair and doesn't wear makeup and pretty well all of---most of our girls do so, are we putting different societal expectations on her or is it okay as long as she is clean and so, I think, that's kind of where we are...as long as she looks clean and presentable. I think that's where...but we did have that conversation as a team, so.... [Kate's voice drifts off and she shrugs her shoulders to indicate that she is done speaking.]

Trish: Who was a part of the team that you are referring to?

Kate: That would have just been, uh, it's a job share, so the classroom teachers, the EA, and myself, were that, had that particular conversation.

Trish: So, did that particular conversation occur during a formal PPP meeting or was it an informal situation?

Kate: It would have been in an informal meeting before the March reporting period.

Trish: Okay.

Kate: Yup. One of the many. [Chuckles.]

Trish: Just out of curiosity, when do you find you can fit it informal conversation during your day at school?

Kate: At school?

Trish: Yeah, when do you see it occurring?

Kate: Hmm, well, Trish, that's extremely challenging. [Chuckles.]

Trish: Is it?

Kate: It is challenging just because there are just so many impeding priorities that...so, if we look at the bigger part of the picture I think the Ministry places the division and the division, of course, has its priorities, and then the school has its business that it has to look after at its own level...and then being in a large school and then just the complex nature of...I don't know if it would matter because I think just being a resource room teacher your case load is demanding and then being a vice principal is demanding, so I usually have to e-mail or in passing we try to set up a meeting, and it's usually at a lunch hour, sometimes its informal, but usually it's at lunch or before or after school that we meet... or on the teacher's prep if it works out...if it works out. I don't think I should say it because I am a vice principal that I have the luxury to....that a regular resource room teacher has the luxury during their prep time. I just wanted to say that.  
[Chuckles.]

Trish: How did you come to that conclusion when you said you believe this child has progressed with the hygiene goal?

Kate: The hygiene goal?

Trish: Mm hm.

Kate: Um, the teachers have data sheets so the EA does the collecting of the data.

Trish: Can you paint a mental picture for me? What do these data sheets look like?

Kate: What do they look like?

Trish: Yeah.

Kate: It's just, um, it's just a chart, yeah, a table, and they'll just make check marks and you know, positive reinforcement and yup.

Trish: Okay, thank you.

Kate: Yup.

Trish: You said that the EA is in charge of that particular chart?

Kate: Yup.

Trish: Who designed the chart?

Kate: The classroom teachers and then they just had me look it over and I provided the classroom teachers examples of how to do that. That's something new, I think, within the last year or two that that has been an expectation. That's new to teachers having to do.

Trish: Are there PPP team members that may disagree with your opinion when you said that you believe she has improved.

Kate: No, no, that was the consensus for the first one, yup.

Trish: You seem to be very confident with your answer. What do you base your confidence on?

Kate: Um, confidence? I think, okay, well, that's a good one. Well, um, the trust, the relationship with the teachers that I have; I have worked with them for a while, so that's key. I work with Melanie on the daily basis, so I also can just observe that her clothes are clean and her presentation is more well kept.

Trish: 3a: Has the child progressed with the second goal which you stated was in the academics domain and it was to increase, um, her fluency and reading rate.

Kate: Has she increased? Yes. So the data (is that part of the question, do you want me to elaborate?)

Trish: Sure, keep going. That's the next question, so you're doing wonderful.

Kate: Kay. So, the data would support that. Of course, using the *Grey Oral* and the *Pinnel*; I wanted to try that out this year. Um, and just in...I do informal reading inventories with the students. So, I probably get to listen to her every couple of weeks while the other kids read. So, that gives me a bit of indication as well. Um, and I guess sight words...I do an informal sight words assessment too and that's improved.

Trish: May I ask when did these assessment occur that your basing your beliefs on or your opinion on?

Kate: Okay, uh, um, informal reading inventories run throughout the year. So, some of its throughout the year and, um, before reporting periods. So, examples of that would be... I probably would do the *Fountess and Pinnell* just before a reporting period...and sight words...I also do, you know, as well as I do the *Towl* for spelling and things like that. Is that good?

Trish: Very.[Both women laugh.]

Kate: Okay.

Trish: Are there any PPP team members that you believe will disagree with your opinion?

Kate: In regards to that?

Trish: [Nods her head.]

Kate: No, I don't think so.

Trish: What do you base your answer on?

Kate: Uh, the teachers are using the *Fountess and Pinnell* this year. The classroom teacher that is doing ELA is a strong teacher; she has done her own informal reading assessment. Just a general...Uh, I think we have enough of a relationship that the teachers would just say...and the EA, um, yeah, would say.

Trish: Cool. In your opinion, has the child progressed with the third goal which was in the academics domain and it was...

Kate:...the writing component? Yup. She has shown growth; I don't think she has shown as much as in the improvement in the fluency and rate, but, um, yes she has definitely shown growth. Is the next question *how*?

Trish: Mm hm.

Kate: Um, we have a classroom writing continuum that we did where the students assess themselves. She showed marked improvement there and then when I look at baseline examples of where her writing is now.

Trish: Are there PPP team members that you believe may disagree with your opinion?

Kate: No.

Trish: The last planned question is thinking back, now just think back to the March PPP if that is more appropriate for you, thinking back to the September and March PPP meetings did any of the PPP team members experience challenges participating in the conversation pertaining to the design of the SMART goals and/or rubrics?

Kate: Okay. Um, I think that classroom teachers and EAs really look to the resource room teacher for guidance. I don't think, unless the training for the SMART goals has occurred at the school level, we know that it hasn't occurred at the system or administrative level, or at the university level for general education teachers. So, I think that's why, um, um, a lot of the weight falls for the SMART goals to be written correctly upon the resource teacher's shoulders. So, that the funding happens. Can you reword it...reread it for me again, Trish, because I kind of lost my train of thought.

Trish: No worries. So, basically, what I'm asking is when you are looking back to the March PPP meeting, did any of the PPP team members experience difficulty as you were discussing or designing any of the SMART goals and/or rubrics?

Kate: Okay. I think that another thing that is supposed to happen is that, especially, if there has been educational psychologist's or speech pathologist's assessment, again, it's very challenging...um, the resource teacher has to do the interpretation. I don't think that the regular classroom teachers truly understand what the recommendations are, so that falls upon the regular...er...the resource room teacher's shoulders as well to interpret and make sure those

recommendations are made or followed throughout the PPP and I'm not sure, depending on what the SMART goals is, whether the classroom teachers understand... I guess I'm wandering off a bit, but I think that you can differing opinions on things, so, for instance a different example would be I have a student who um, has significant, um, comprehension issues, so once you hit middle years, and it's a boy, how do you determine...distinguish...I'm trying to think of my words.

Trish: Right.

Kate: Um, what is attention seeking behavior and when a student really doesn't understand. So, a classroom teacher, for instance sees it as the child is attention seeking and you are telling the teacher "No, the kid doesn't really get it." And then you go into the PPP meeting with the parents and the child and the child starts crying and it's clear doesn't really get it, but the teacher, you know, sees it differently. So, you use that to try to get the teacher to understand that, no, the kid doesn't really get it and he's not acting out or asking for help for attention. So, that doesn't really pertain to Mel's but um, I think the teachers could see the presenting issues there.

Trish: Okay.

Kate: Yup.

Trish: Well, now that you have begun to speak on this topic in a more general fashion I actually have a few questions on the general topic.

Kate: Okay.

Trish: Through a conversation I noticed that a few things popped up.

Kate: Okay.

Trish: you mentioned that, um, concern for time when it came to discussing different points of interest or concern with different team members, also you mentioned...came up with the idea that it can challenging if different team members can have different levels or expertise and also different knowledge base, right?

Kate: Yup.

Trish: Um, other researchers that have written the textbooks and literature that I got to study would label these things as barriers of collaboration or things that may interfere with collaboration.

Kate: Yup.

Trish: Can you think of any other possible barriers for collaboration?

Kate: Barriers for collaboration...I certainly can, Trish. One we're dealing with right now in our school is um, when I came back, so, teaching, I just professional teaching personalities, so ,uh, differences in opinions between EAs and teachers and depending where the power in those relationships lies and whether at meetings...I guess depending on the resource room teacher's experience, ability to manage meetings and keep people on course for the targeted area, can create problems. So, here's an example of a teacher, you know sometimes an EA doesn't feel valued and sometimes not being invited to meetings and then feeling that they don't have a voice or if the work they do is important. And you know, some of them that work with the kids do know the kids the best and I also think that another barrier in the PPP meeting and the process is the ...um, er, my slant is that it happens more in the middle years, that EAs become the teachers ...I always say that the teachers know the curriculum the best but as resource teachers our job is to figure out the children are going to access the curriculum and I think sometimes EAs end up finding resources and um, and do the instruction without the guidance of a classroom teacher and I think that's partially due to... sometimes it's because they don't see the child sitting there and they don't have the correct adaptations made for them so at least they find work so I think that's another barrier that ties in with the PPP process. What else do I want to say to you? You go on and I am going to think of some other things that I will add later.

Trish: Okay, excellent. Um, when you were referring to the experiences of the resource room teacher were you speaking of the length of time they have been working as a resource room teacher or were you referring to the variety of experiences that they have had as a resource room teacher? I didn't fully understand.

Kate: Oh, okay. When you say *variety* you mean the difference in communities, is that what you mean?

Trish: Differences in communities or....

Kate:...differences in role?

Trish: Exactly, exactly.

Kate: Well, I think any of those is just going to help you to see things in a different way.

Trish: Okay.

Kate: So, yeah. I also think, though, so, that um, when I talk about resource teachers I believe they have at least their special ed. certification at minimum and so, that, for me, is a real challenge because I believe the division and the ministry really truly wants to hire people who are qualified , but I know that we are not always able to put people in who are qualified and so I know, from being at the last Ministry meeting, I heard an outcry from the across the part of the province that was there for this that, um, and that we need to do a better job starting at the university level.

Trish: For special education students.

Kate: Yeah, for special education students and also for our general education teachers because the reality of a classroom today is that you are going to have students who have special needs; you are going to gifted children; we have our ESL population growing; just the different ways that kids learn. So, I'm not sure that one class really meets the needs what...the reality of what teachers face.

Trish: You often used a term that is often used in the literature, but I'm just wondering what does the phrase professional personalities mean to you?

Kate: Professional personalities mean to me? Um...

Trish: Can you define it in your own words?

Kate: In my own words, Trish? I think, just think that there is an expectation when you are working with kids...about how you behave as a colleague; as a staff member. So, probably, well, you know, the EAs don't fall under that, the Code of Conduct, and things like that.

Trish: You say they should. Why do you say that? Why do you think an EA should fall under the Code of Conduct?

Kate: Because they are staff and we are all professionals.

Trish: Okay.

Kate: Yup. They are part of the team. Right? So, yeah.

Trish: During our conversation you made a lot of reference to, um, PPP team members. Can you um, speaking... I would like you to first comment on this question in general terms and then, also, specifically for this particular student, u, who do you see as being appropriate members for the PPP team?

Kate: Okay, well, I think it varies depending on the student, their strengths and their needs, kay? But, generally you should have a resource teacher there, the parents there, I also really think that at a certain age the student should be there, I don't think that happens that enough, so that the student can take ownership for their own learning and then, specially for when they move onto high school they need to advocate for themselves. So, I think...did I say classroom teachers, the educational assistant and then when and if appropriate, you know it's not going to happen every time, but school psychologist, SLP, OT you know, it just....any other outside agencies that the child be involved with...social services...you know, Big Brother, Big Sister, anyone who may have valuable input. The administrator should definitely be there as well.

Trish: So, just to summarize you mentioned the student, the classroom teacher, the resource room teacher, EA, or educational associate, um, other employees of our division, or outside agencies such as Ed. Psych. Or SLP or um, Big Brothers and such, and administration if they are able to come, am I correct?

Kate: Yup. Um, I think administration needs to be there.

Trish: Kay. How about parents?

Kate: Yup. Parents too, yup. Sorry, I thought I had said parents.

Trish: No worries, no worries. Maybe I forgot to jot it down. [Both women laugh.] Now, do you see um, those particular team members attending all through three meetings, or are there particular PPP meetings that you feel it necessary for them to attend?

Kate: Okay. I think it depends, again, on how intensive the student's needs are, and what role/how much support certain members provide the student and um, so I would say at the beginning of the year when you initiate the process, well, now that we are at the end of the year and that's when we should begin the PPP process for next year, the initial team should be present. Uh, you, know I think it depends on.. So, in March and stuff I don't know if, um, the whole team needs to attend and, unless, things are going well um, I'm not sure if the administration needs to attend if things are going well. So, in Melanie's case, um, I wouldn't...my expectations wouldn't have been that my principal attend that meeting. So, um, or that the SLP or any...the school psychologist or anyone like that attend. But, the parents, the teacher, EA and me.

Trish: Alright. Often during our conversation you used the word *team*. That's another word that's bounced around in the literature and conversations and such. Define it in your own words.

Kate: Define it in my own words....well, people who are working together for a common goal.

Trish: Thank you. Awesome. Well, that concludes my questions. Now comes my favourite questions: If our roles were reversed what question would you ask me about his topic?

Kate: On this topic, Trish?

Trish: If you can't think of one, that's okay too.

Kate: Oh, I'll think of one! [Both women laugh.]

Trish: For some reason, that doesn't surprise me! [Both women laugh, again.]

Kate: I just want to make sure...because there's a few things I wanted to make sure I covered. The one thing that I don't think I told you when we went back, um, the rubrics and the SMART goals, Trish...So, I think having a lot of mo...like, lots of examples for teachers to refer to is really important. When they are first doing it, um you know, so that when they are doing it the models and examples....I have done many different things in the past; sometimes I have provided them models and examples and asked them to do it. I guess, you also need to know the teachers that you are working with and it helps for you to know who will need more support than the other ones. So, with that I don't think that my other resource partner had a teacher that was really frustrated with "How am I supposed to know this stuff?" Um, you know and that, that's the truth.

Trish: I had asked you my final question, but I thought it was interesting that you took advantage of the moment and you actually proceeded to respond to my very last comment which would be “Please feel free to add or omit any comments to our previous conversations.” And you had mentioned that, how you assist the teacher in designing the SMART goal.

Kate: Right, the other thing that we’ve done, Trish, is um, my resource partner and I did take the initiative, with my administrator’s support, to, uh, um, we did, um, an inservice for our teachers at a staff meeting for the teachers on how to do SMART goals. So, that helped them because without that, classroom teachers don’t really understand what a SMART goal and how to do it. So, they also had time to practice then, too. Um, so the key point I’d like to make about that is that you have to have an administrator that understands the importance and the reason why and so that hasn’t happened at the division level; that’s a barrier. So, unless we’re working with our administrator’s support, the resource teacher in that capacity...and another thing is that not all resource room teachers are necessarily as confident with presenting as well. So, that would be a barrier, as well, I think. So, that needs to be an expectation at the division level. Or else, workshops at the division level; and I think that may be a little more challenging in the rural settings, too.

Trish: Oh , may I ask why?

Kate: Uh, well, just if you are going to do something at the division-wide level just because of distance and stuff.

Trish: Travel?

Kate: Yup. Unless they get in on video conferencing something. So, do I want to say anything else on this? Uh, I must think it takes a lot of support and training on how to do it and collecting of data, but as we are talking more about AFL in Saskatoon Public language, not the Ministry’s language, I think it makes more sense to classroom teachers, just in the experience that I’ve had, um, with that, so, I just wanted to add that, that’s important. Um...

Trish: Do you have any other comments that you would like to add?

Kate: Yes. I’ll just look at the questions again because there’s probably something else that I do want to say.

Trish: By all means.

Kate: So, I think the other part of initial meetings and stuff is it is really challenging ---it’s easier when you are the resource teacher and you have worked with the student for a few years , but it is really challenging to come in and, uh, sometimes without knowing the person to create a meaningful Personal Program Plan or one that is um, that you as the classroom teacher can make work. So, so, that’s something that has to be kept in mind. Anything else? No, I don’t it’s a disagreeing [referring to question 3c.]; it’s just a lot of learning on teachers and EAs’ parts, but yeah, no disagreeing really.

Trish: Okay. Just to clarify my understanding of how PPPs are written in your school setting. You had mentioned that you provide teachers support through inservice, as well as informal support. For example, you had mentioned templates and that sort of thing. Um, when it comes to the actual writing of the SMART goals, who is involved in that; the design of the SMART goal?

Kate: Oh, that would be the classroom teachers and, probably, myself; maybe the EA, but you know, the overall themes would emerge, but the actual writing, um, would be the classroom teacher and myself.

Trish: Okay. So, for the PPP meeting, well, let's say the student---when appropriate---the classroom teacher, the EA, Ed. Psych. And administrator and parent and such ... when they are all in the room together, do you see that as a time when you are introducing a SMART goal or the idea for the SMART goal emerges.

Kate: I see it more as when the idea for the SMART goal emerges and then probably input in on what strategies and resources would you use be discussed probably...and recommendations by the Ed. Psych. Would also be discussed if you involve the school psychologist.

Trish: Okay, do you have any other comments that you would like to add?

Kate: Other comments...The only other comment that I would like to make if that SBS Module, so that's a...a module for administrators...and, uh...

Trish: Sorry, what does that acronym stand for?

Kate: Saskatoon School-Based Admin...no, Saskatchewan School-Based Administrative Modules.

Trish: Okay.

Kate: Sorry. Um, so, the one that I was at, for a brief part started to talk about universal design and the adaptive dimension and what's struck me was that um, and I am going to say the wrong term, but if a typical regular classroom teacher was looking for information on Personal Program Plans and they were just looking in Saks Learning because they would be looking in the, you know, the um, so that conversation came up with the administrators that were there or the people who were aspiring to be principals and were classroom teachers, so they didn't have an awareness on how they would find that information on the Ministry's website.

Trish: Oh, that's interesting.

Kate: Yup.

Trish: Okay and what was the answer?

Kate: It's under the Ministry's Child Service's. So, that struck...so, I think that ties into looking for information on Persona Program Plans...that struck me.

Trish: So, do you see that as being a possible barrier?

Kate: Absolutely, I do.

Trish: Actually being able to find the information?

Kate: Yup.

Trish: Okay.

Kate: Um...

Trish: In our province, do you feel it's, um, when it comes to resources, that there is a lack of resources or is it simply not being to locate the resources?

Kate: To do Personal Program Plans?

Trish: Yeah.

Kate: Mm... I think probably there could be more resources from the Ministry with good examples with some explicit instruction, but I also think that a big piece is, um, working inside both special education and general education. So, that was another theme that emerged as well, from the special supports teacher's Ministry meeting a few weeks ago. So, I think another big silo is that general education has its priorities and um, and special education has its, but the eight falls upon special education teachers. Another perfect example is Response to Intervention.

Trish: Okay. Why do you think that is a perfect example?

Kate: I just asked my staff what Response to Intervention was. My principal put up his hand...of a staff of over thirty people. So, again, administrators um are given and again they don't feel like they are the experts and I believe administrators look to resource room teachers as the experts in the building and I think its intimidating doing , so who...who at the division level right now administrators, both principals and vice principals in Saskatoon have been given information on Response to Intervention, um, resource teachers have, but who's responsibility is it then to take it back to classroom teachers? If the administrator doesn't do it and if the resource room teacher doesn't do it, how does the classroom teacher find out about tier one and tier two is unless it's just in conversation when you...so, that's just another example we work in silos? So it's priorities and as a new curriculum comes out it will be interesting to see, um, if, so, we talk about adaptive dimension or universal design what's support s and how will the special education department working with the curriculum department---because at least the curriculum got together this time and talked grades 6 to 8, but special education has to be in there. Yup.

Trish: So can you answer your own question? Who should take the information (RTI and SMART goals and collaboration and such)...who should be responsible for taking it back to the school staffs?

Kate: Well, that's a good question. Well, I guess if it needs to be directed to be directly a responsibility of the resource room teachers then how and who is supporting that? OS, that message has to be given to administration, right? And, so, I don't think that happens on a consistent basis.

Trish: Okay.

Kate: And again, in Response to Intervention when I was at the SSBD Module no one knew what it was.

Trish: Kay. Well, thank you for such thorough answers. Um, I did give you the opportunity to...

Kate:...ask you a question?

Trish: Yeah.

Kate: I don't know what to ask....mm..

Trish: I reserve the right not to answer, though, I am just curious.

Kate: Oh....[Both women laugh.] I see how you work things . Um,

Trish: And, of course you have the right pass, if you choose.

Kate: No, I don't want to pass, Trish. So, you're looking at Personal Program Plans, teams, barriers, um,...I'm trying to think of something.

Trish: Maybe that would be a good way to start our next interview?

Kate: Yeah

.

Trish: With your permission I would like to push *stop* on the recorder.

Kate: Yup. [Laughs.]

Trish: Thank you.

## APPENDIX N

### Kate Interview Two

Trish: Alright, at your request, I will remind you of a question that you wanted to answer sometime during this interview. Please don't feel that you have to respond to it right now; you can respond to it at any time in the interview. The question, was simply, if our roles were reversed, what question do you feel the interviewer should ask the interviewee? Is there a certain question or a certain topic that you feel should also be brought up for future research?

Kate: Okay. Uh, can I answer that at the end of it?

Trish: Yup, by all means. 1a: What adjective do you think best describes how you feel that particular PPP meeting that you just had for the child that we discussed in our previous conversation?

Kate: Adjective? Mm...

Trish: If you want to use a phrase, you can do that?

Kate: Can I answer that later?

Trish: Mm hm.

Kate: [Laughs.] Okay, let's see. It was our first meeting, so it went well.

Trish: What do you mean by *first meeting*?

Kate: Well, she was identified later in the year.

Trish: If I recall correctly, was it not May? Is that the student?

Kate: Um, Mel's? Yup.

Trish: Okay. Did you want to elaborate on the phrase?

Kate: *It went well*? Sure. So, well, because, um, it had been challenging to get the parents in, so, it was nice to meet them, go over it, discuss the purpose of the plan, to get their input and then the transitioning piece for Mel for next year is critical because she does have a significant Learning Disability. So, having her assessed again, we are going to a MAPS in the Fall, get her hooked up with assistive technology and those sorts of things. So, for that reason, I thought the meeting was a success because if we hadn't met I don't think they would have understood, um, all of the key things that need to happen next year for transition to high school.

Trish: You had mentioned that it was a challenge to get the parents in; why is that?

Kate: Just being busy and away. We actually had our PPP meeting later than the rest because they were in another city. So, just busy lives.

Trish: Is that a challenge? Do you face any challenges, as a resource room teacher, if you hand in your PPPs...

Kate:...later? Yup, I think you feel pressure. I think because the Ministry has deadlines for central office; central office has deadlines for you. I think it does create some pressures, but as long as you are doing the best job that you can do; I think that is all someone can ask of you, so you send them in without the parents' signatures, as we did this year, and then we met later.

Trish: Mm hm.

Kate: So, giving yourself that release...

Trish: Is that one of those cases; you sent it in early?

Kate: Yup.

Trish: Oh, okay, so, there must have been goals...they were reviewed before the parents came to the meeting?

Kate: Yup.

Trish: Okay. So, it was kind of a 2 part meeting?

Kate: Yup.

Trish: Oh, okay.

Kate: Um, but my experience shows that often, like when we send things home, like if we send the PPP home to review, it's dependent upon the parents and, um, the value the parent sees in the process. Um, whether they actually looked at it...and some parents want to be involved and they feel confident enough and some, I think, over time, with encouragement will give input. Um, I think it's kind of based on confidence, culture, and all sorts of different things.

Trish: Okay. So, those items that you mentioned, do you feel that they could be barriers of collaboration, such as difference in cultures?

Kate: Yup. I think now our...well, I've worked with First Nations people and yes, I think that is definitely a barrier and I also think, Trish, with the growing ESL/EAL population, um, because of language barriers, because of the different, um, way people view education and different levels of respect they have for it. Yup, I don't know if there is a right word for...well, it is in a language context, but, um, so yeah,

Trish: So, perhaps it's a challenge?

Kate: It's a challenge.

Trish: 'Kay. What adjective do you think best describes the effectiveness of that particular PPP meeting?

Kate: Oh, succ...the effectiveness? What adjective describes the effectiveness?

Trish: So, your ability to achieve the goals and the requirements of a PPP...as a team.

Kate: Well, I think, based on that situation, it was successful. I think it was successful because we identified key areas that need to be targeted next year and the parents came to an understanding about that and seemed to want to have input when we do the MAPS process in the Fall. So, yeah, I think that was successful. Um, there were some...do you want me to elaborate?

Trish: Sure.

Kate: So, I think, of course, there were some challenges with having the child identified at that point in the year and working with the classroom teachers to, um, take ownership and understanding, um, what a learning disability is and what sort of adaptations, um, should be made for this particular student.

Trish: I am going to be really bold and I am going to connect 2 different concepts that you mentioned in 2 different conversations and then I want to hear your opinion. You mentioned that, um, it's sometimes difficult to encourage or to have teachers feel more ownership over their own learning; to take that learning one more step to understand the child's challenges more, am I correct?

Kate: Mm hm.

Trish: Okay, and then, also, you mentioned that, um, the experience that a person has in special education...specifically, you were referring to SMART goals. Do you see a connection between the two? A person's lack of experience and, also, their willing to go out and research more?

Kate: [Kate had to take a phone call at this point, so the recorder was briefly stopped.]

Trish: Okay, so, to jog your memory...let's say I am a teacher who does not have very much experience and am wondering if that may lead me to not research about something that I already don't know very much about.

Kate: I think that could be case, but I also think it's a whole host of things. I think it depends upon the individual

Trish: Their personality, you mean?

Kate: Yeah, their personality, their drive, um, I think, also, um, something changes often, in my experience, from the primary to the middle years where it becomes more content based and so, I find it very different working with the primary teachers and middle years teachers. I also think that people view us as the experts in the building, even administration, on anything to do with special ed. and so we still need to work on everyone taking ownership and I also think it's how much time people have in their lives too and all of the different needs. So, I think it's a whole host of variables.

Trish: When you refer to the word *needs* are you referring to the individual's needs or the student's needs?

Kate: Um, I can't remember what I said.

Trish: Well, you were referring to their personal life and....

Kate: I was just referring to, you know, classroom caseloads and numbers, you know, this year we are going to have 30 some in a classroom. We are going to have several intensive supports students and that's not addressing the ESL/EAL students and just the other students on both ends of the other continuum, like the LD kids and the kids who would...aren't identified with intensive supports who would be resource kids and the gifted kids. So, it's an awful lot to manage and if you have split, you have more, you know, in the smaller schools.

Trish: In your previous answers you used adjectives such as *went well* to describe your feelings about the PPP meeting. You, also, used an adjective such as *successful*, to describe the effectiveness of the PPP meeting. How did you come to those conclusions?

Kate: [Kate had to take a phone call at this point, so the recorder was briefly stopped.]

Trish: So, why did you choose those adjectives?

Kate: Well, um, I think because Mel was there too and, um, at the PPP meeting, which I think is important. So, she can take ownership of her own learning; her own Personal Program Plan. Um, I guess because I felt like, um, the parents were engaged. I think the teachers learned something from that meeting.

Trish: Okay, what sort of cues do you take in to come up with those conclusions?

Kate: I think it would conversation; conversation output and input. Um, and body language.

Trish: 'Kay. Thanks. 3a: Were you concerned whether any of the PPP team members were having difficulty with following the conversation during any portion of the meeting.

Kate: Following it? Um....

Trish: Or we could say *participating*.

Kate: No, not in this because it was a small group and I think everyone felt comfortable from their body language that I picked up on. Um, I think Mel has a good relationship with myself and her classroom teachers. I know she does; she speaks positively about her classroom teachers. So, I think that makes a big difference, um, because I would be more worried about her and how comfortable she's feeling because I have been in meetings where kids...where we've had more...probably more members on the Personal Program Plan and that can be intimidating...for a student especially. And we need to make sure that we are speaking to the student and not about the student.

Trish: So, while we're discussing how to involve a student I would like to ask you how you decide when to involve the student in a PPP meeting?

Kate: How do I decide? I think I look at their maturity level, Trish, and my relationship with them and I discuss it with the classroom teacher and, um, probably the parents too, um, and see what they think. Depending...but once they hit grade, for me, by grade six they have to...they need to be there. So, I wouldn't talk to the parents; it would just be an expectation.

Trish: No matter what, a child in grade 6 is going to be in a PPP meeting?

Kate: Yeah, well based on...it would also be based on, um, their cognitive ability and things like that, like if there were some emotional issues or something like that...but, I think, in most cases yes they should be there.

Trish: 'Kay. Does the size of the PPP team affect the success of the PPP meeting?

Kate: The size of it...well, I think it's, you know, you have students with more intensive needs, um, the size typically grows and I believe you need all of those people there because to see and understand the whole child. So, I think that's when you, as the case manager, do have strong skills in communication and leading the meeting.

Trish: Alright, 3b: you've already answered it. What steps, if any, were taken to ensure that all members understood all of the topics discussed during the PPP meeting?

Kate: Um, everyone had a copy of the Personal Program Plan which is not very environmentally friendly, but, um, it was sent home before, um for parents to look at so that they could read it over and decide if they thought any changes should be made because to me, it's the child's and the parents' understanding, um, in this process, so, um just having the chance to have input and clarify things and not use so much technical language that we use in special ed.

Trish: Are there PPP team members that may disagree with your opinion with how successful the meeting was and the visual aides you provided were successful?

Kate: On this Personal Program Plan? No because the teachers had taken ownership of the goals.

Trish: I find it interesting that you clarified that I was speaking strictly of this PPP; would you like to speak on this topic in general or would you like to move onto the next question?

Kate: No, I think there are times when people, um, don't necessarily understand a disability. An example would be in a meeting, where the teacher, to her credit had read the PPP, she had made comments on the report card and Personal Program Plan and I tried to clarify them that he probably...this child, um, probably may present like he is just fooling around, but he probably doesn't understand what is going on. So, we had him in the Personal Program Plan meeting with his dad and it was evident to me that he doesn't really understand because of his body language and he looked like he was going to break out in tears and then we had another meeting in June and talking about the sound field system and how he doesn't really need it for hearing. [Kate had to take a phone call at this point, so the recorder was briefly stopped.] So, I think I was talking about...oh, I remember how she started to speak of the sound field system and, you know, it's broke right now because it doesn't help him hear and the father clarified that it wasn't for hearing it was for processing and that other teachers have said it helped. So, sometimes it's a journey working with some teachers.

Trish: I think it's interesting that you touched upon a dynamic that can exist in PPP meetings, in my opinion, that sometimes an individual may surprise you and you may think they are not the experts on a topic, but they turn around and educate others.

Kate: Yup, that's right.

Trish: Do you often experience that in PPP meetings?

Kate: Yes.

Trish: Can you provide another example?

Kate: Oh, can we dialogue and if I think of another can I...

Trish: Sounds great. I can always move onto another question.

Kate: That would be great.

Trish: In your opinion, has the child progressed with any or all of the goals?

Kate: Has she progressed? Yes, absolutely. A lot of it was her taking ownership over a lot of things this year. It made a significant difference in her learning and her relationships with her classroom teachers and myself...I think it all helped in areas such as the hygiene one.

Trish: How did you come to that conclusion; you were very confident in your answer.

Kate: Because of pre and post-test data. The teachers had to submit data sheets this year to show that, um, to support, their goals. Um, would you like me to share another story that may illustrate what I'm saying?

Trish: By all means...

Kate: Well, now with the SMART goals I think, um, I don't think everyone is understanding the part about measuring and how it happens in the classroom. So, when I came back after my leave, I am not sure...I had a teacher and student that I had been working with for 3 years. So, I know this student very, very well. Her Personal Program Plan came in March and I looked over it and the goals had been set I couldn't believe that she had met them all so that's when I asked for data sheets to completed. I had to work with the teacher and surprisingly the goals had changed in June. So, I have also, in informal conversations with other people out in the field, I think that a lot of people are guess-estimating their progress on the goals.

Trish: Do you think there would be any PPP team members that may disagree with your opinion on how this child has experienced success with her PPP goals?

Kate: No.

Trish: Why do you think that an agreement can exist in your PPP team?

Kate: Um, it was small and I had the time to work with these teachers. So, I have a good working relationship with these teachers, but they were on a big learning curve as well.

Trish: 'Kay. Do you think the data you asked them to collect assisted with that...

Kate: Absolutely and this year they did some assessment this year which tied in with Mel's Personal Program Plan. So, they had the inservice on the Fountas and Pinnell and informal reading assessment. And so, it's a job share that took ownership of Language Arts... [Kate had to take a phone call at this point, so the recorder was briefly stopped.]

Trish: If you had the chance to change any element of that PPP meeting what would it be and why?

Kate: A chance to change...no, honestly, in that meeting, there is nothing.

Trish: Now we have some very general questions; nice and quick. How many years of teaching experience in total and how many years of teaching experience do you have as a resource room teacher?

Kate: As a resource room teacher I have...okay, well, let's figure out how many years I have been teaching in total...um, 11 and as a resource room teacher:9.

Trish: Okay. How many students are in this school?

Kate: Our numbers fluctuate almost daily. About 500.

Trish: 'Kay. If you were to describe this community that this school is situated, how would you describe it?

Kate: The community?

Trish: Yup.

Kate: Supportive of their kids, um, influential, higher economic status.

Trish: Influential in terms of the community or...?

Kate: Yup.

Trish: Okay. How about the school environment?

Kate: Academic.

Trish: Okay. Do you think the parents are influential in the school environment?

Kate: Yup.

Trish: How many PPPs are responsible for as the case manager?

Kate: Because I am, uh, this year I have 8. My partner has 12.

Trish: Why is there a difference in number? That is a difference of 4?

Kate: She is full time.

Trish: And why are you only partial?

Kate: I am also the vice principal.

Trish: How long have you been a vice principal?

Kate: I have been, well 5 years, Trish, and one year on mat leave and I did acting on and off as well.

Trish: Okay. Now, there are two questions we need to finish up, if you choose to do so.

Kate: 'Kay.

Trish: The first question is if there is anything you would like to add, omit, or reiterate from any of our conversations? If you wanted, you could also discuss, well, you seem interested in reversing our roles and stating topics that, as the interviewer, you would have liked to have been discussed. Would you like to answer either one of those?

Kate: Well, I think one thing that I neglected to say is probably, um, as we look at different models for EA support, um, I also...our EA also wasn't able to attend that meeting because was the time it was held even though they were invited...so, I would like to say that that's important because they have important insights and I think if we don't invite them...I think that's another administrative issue that should, you know, it's something that may help your research because I think when you don't at least invite them and so it becomes a time in lieu sort of thing; an administrative sort of thing with how you are going to handle those hours, but I think the message that is sometimes sent is that they are not a valued member of the school team. Otherwise, I have always hoped that they can be there, but sometimes there's variables that you can't control and that sort of thing. That's probably just a piece to add. Um, and that can be challenging for a resource room teacher because you may want the EA to be there, however, um, your administration cannot support the time for whatever reason or they're going to or, you know, they usually can't pay them, um, then that, you know, can present some challenges. So, I think the importance of the administration understanding, um, the collaborative element of a Personal Program Plan. Now, I attend as the administrator, so I sit as a dual role. Um, I think though it is important at, um, the meetings that an administrator does sit, now you could appreciate 20 Personal Program Plans in a school is a significant amount of time with PPPs and other priorities and when you are dealing in a context of a school that may have some more behaviour issues and things like that. So, everyone understanding everyone else's roles and trying their best on educating administrators on the importance of at least popping in and just saying or putting that date on the calendar and it also goes to the resource room teacher to communicate to the administrator when their Personal Program Plans are.

Trish: Okay.

Kate: Or the classroom teacher tell the principal.

Trish: Awesome. You kind of combined your two answers, but I would like to give you a chance to reply, if you wish, are there any other items that you would like to add, omit, or reiterate?

Kate: Uh no. I just think that it's important---well, I guess yes I do, it's important that we do our best job, as teachers and resource teachers, to, um, gain parent input in the process.

Trish: 'Kay, excellent. How does one go about that?

Kate: Well, I think you need to establish a relationship first and then explicitly tell people, um, you know, what their role is in the Personal Program Plan and what your expectations are, especially when talking about our ESL/EAL community and probably our First Nations, as well. And then, understanding their cultures and values and norms and trying to...yeah.

Trish: Okay.

Kate: ...and appreciate those differences.

Trish: Thank you. Now, during our conversations, you and I have often discussed possible barriers of collaboration.

Kate: Uh huh.

Trish: In your opinion, how, if at all, have the new requirements, and when I say new requirements I mean the SMART goals that were made a requirement in the funding grant in 2007 and the rubric outcome sampling that was made a requirement in the funding grant in 2006, do you feel that they have had any impact on the PPP process?

Kate: I often think the SMART goals...I was trained in the United States...so, the SMART goal was not new to me. So, I came to Saskatchewan already writing my PPP goals that way. Uh, and was challenged at looking at some of the Personal Program Plans, um, because they would be anecdotal notes; they weren't a working document. So, now, I think there's some, uh, it depends, I still believe, for example, it depends on the resource teacher, her relationship with the staff and her support from administration and their understanding of the Personal Program Plan and I think as administrators often look to us as experts and don't always take ownership over the Personal Program Plans that they need to. So, what I'm saying that it is...you are actually using it as a living, breathing document in the classroom; the EAs have it, they know how to use it. I have worked with EAs before that don't have a copy of the Personal Program Plan... which makes me smile. Um, so unless there's some measure, that's why I actually had them turn them in. I used to write tables and graphs to have them work---the teachers and EAs---and this year I sent them out exemplars and asked them to submit them because of some of the concerns I had when I came back.

Trish: Alright. Okay, thank you. Is there anything else that you would like to add, omit, or reiterate?

Kate: Uh, the rubric process... um, are we talking about how the students are identified...no you are focusing on the SMART goals?

Trish: Oh, the addition of the requirements?

Kate: Yes. At least, in our school division, I think it has been embraced instead of using a medical model. Um, because now I can actually---when a student actually needs the support he gets the support. Um, they don't need it---you now, I see it as really successful. I know what happened in the past was that people hung onto students being designated so that they could hold onto the EAs if other students needed it and I always thought that that was morally and ethically wrong because that gave that student a label that they didn't necessarily need. You know, I could see them wanting to help the other student, but I also saw it as a moral and ethical issue and now I think, as resource teachers and as teachers, we don't have to have that struggle. So I think that is a very positive outcome of the changes.

Trish: Okay, do you consider this particular conversation concluded?

Kate: Yes.

Trish: Can I turn off the recorder?

Kate: Yes.

## APPENDIX O

### Kate Interview Three

Trish: Number 1: When is the optimal time to review and complete rubric outcome sampling in your opinion?

Kate: To review and complete?

Trish: To discuss the child's progress and then to actually have the rubric form completed.

Kate: To have it initially completed or you mean finalized?

Trish: Finalized, yeah.

Kate: Uh, I think at the same time as the Personal Program Plan.

Trish: Why do you say that?

Kate: Um, well, because there's other goals and the Personal Program Plan is a living, breathing document and, uh, um, you...as a resource room teacher that is the time you will be meeting with the teacher...you know, it's not another time that you will have to meet; it just makes sense, time management wise, why you do that. Um, then look at the data that went along with it to the Personal Program Plan, that can help with the decision.

Trish: Okay. When was the rubric outcome sampling that was connected with PPP you chose to focus upon reviewed and completed? So, when did you focus on the results?

Kate: On the results? Well, we probably started in May, um, in May we started the last set of data for some of the questions and then in early June we set up some times to discuss and look at the data. [Kate and Trish had to tend to a mishap with the coffee maker and needed to stop the recorder.] Can you repeat the question?

Trish: Sure. When was the rubric outcome sampling that was connected with PPP you chose to focus upon reviewed and completed?

Kate: Okay. I've already answered that one.

Trish: Awesome. Number 3: How were the participants of the outcome rubric review selected?

Kate: How were they chosen? The individuals that would have had anecdotal information; done observations and completed the data.

Trish: So, in this case, who were those individuals (and please know that I do not need names; strictly the roles of individuals).

Kate: Sure, there's two teachers that are job sharing; and the educational assistant and myself.

Trish: Were the parents involved at all during this particular conversation? Or do you ever involve parents during this type of conversation?

Kate: Um, this case we always invite the parents. Um, this case was difficult because the parents were away on working trips, so we just met with them after and, uh, were open to changing at that point in time any, uh, information that we had collected or added anything that they still wanted.

Trish: Okay. Um, you had mentioned that the 2 teachers are job sharing, with all of the PPP teams consist of teachers who are job sharing or do you ever have a chance to have a PPP team that has an individual teacher?

Kate: Yup, absolutely.

Trish: Do you find that there is any difference in how you approach that collaborative process when are working with individual teachers as opposed to job sharing teachers?

Kate: Well, it's just that it is even more difficult to meet because they work at different times, so to find a time that they both be there, um, is a little more challenging than working with just one teacher and one educational assistant. Um, and then I guess it depends on how they have decided to collect the data and which goals they are responsible for. So, in this case one job share was teaching ELA, so she just took the responsibility for the Language Arts domain. So, she was responsible for that and, um, they did some of the hygiene. I think one to more ownership than the other.

Trish: 4a: What best adjective best describes how you feel about that particular review of the outcome rubric sampling?

Kate: Um, it would be with the Personal Program Plan.; I think it was a good start and I look forward to continuing next year to expand and go a little further.

Trish: You say it's a good start; why do you...

Kate: Why do I say that? I say that because she was just recently diagnosed, well not diagnosed, but identified as an Intensive Supports student and I think time and building a relationship and getting to understand this student takes a while. Having her identified late in the year and myself just coming off of a maternity leave all played parts into how many goals and objectives and how much time I had to work with the teachers to help them really understand what Mel's strengths are and what areas we really needed to focus on.

Trish: How did you come to that conclusion? Why did you use the adjective you used?

Kate: Um, I guess that's just how I feel. It takes...it's a lot of time and work to...first you need to develop a relationship with the teachers where they are going to trust you and then second, to

help teachers see, for example Mel has a learning disability, so, um, she can do the work, but we just need to adapt, um, how they...their instruction... her access to the curriculum, the environment and pieces for Jennifer. So, it's time and the ability to meet and work with these teachers is really central to having a strong Personal Program Plan.

Trish: Okay. Um, throughout our conversations you have often referred to the relationship that you share with your colleagues and today you brought up the word trust; how does one build those things? What's the key ingredient or what's the recipe to building a relationship with your colleagues?

Kate: Mm, time, working together, time is a big one. That's a good question...yeah, I think time and the ability to work together and getting to understand each other strengths and what we each bring to the table, and knowing that, um, I'm there to support them, and, um, that they're the experts of the curriculum. So, we both come to the table bringing certain pieces that the other one needs.

Trish: If you're regular classroom teaching, um, colleagues are experts of the curriculum, what is the resource room teacher?

Kate: What is the resource room teacher?

Trish: Mm hm.

Kate: I'd say they are the experts in, um, helping teachers understanding the nature of, um, different disabilities, access to resources, access to instructional strategies, how to adapt the environment, um, different ways that you can assess...those would be many of the different things.

Trish: 'Kay. Were you concerned if any of the individuals were having difficulty following conversation during any portion of the meeting?

Kate: When you *following* do you mean *understanding*?

Trish: Yeah.

Kate: Um, yup. Well, if I tied it to...I still think there is a lot of work...one of the teachers...she, um, it was evident to me, in my other role as vice principal, that when she handed in the report card without any percentages or comments that said to me she still wasn't understanding. I asked her if she had changed the curricular objectives, um, and she hadn't; she had just adapted it, but she felt that she didn't need to give her marks so, um, again, I guess that it didn't necessarily happen during the Personal Program Plan, but it's another piece of the...it shows, um, how important a resource teacher is to support the classroom teacher. It's a journey.

Trish: Do you think the fact that she wasn't giving that particular child any marks, that that had any impact on the PPP process?

Kate: Yup, yup, because I think it tells me that she wasn't understanding.

Trish: So, mainly it's evidence?

Kate: Yup.

Trish: Okay. What information to you base your answer on?

Kate: It would be informal conversations and not just during the PPP meeting, but just, you know...just walking by and talk about Mel or through e-mails. Um, yeah, and the report card was another signal that most teachers wouldn't have an opportunity to see, but I did.

Trish: Okay, how was the problem resolved?

Kate: Um, well, I had to sit with this teacher. I created a list of things that I was concerned about and in dialogue when I asked her what instruction looked like in classroom. I think she came to an understanding that Mel should have had a percentage based on...I think she really...I'm not sure what she was thinking when she didn't give her percentages, especially when she wasn't, um, really adapting the curriculum very much for her. So, I was confused, I guess. Sometimes, I think that teachers get confused about what goes there and why what goes there...Personal Program Plan, resource teacher's reports, report cards, adaptation page, Read to Succeed report.

Trish: When you say *where they go* you mean *where they go in the cum*?

Kate: No, what information goes where and why. So, we've done inservice after inservice and spent time with teachers of a staff of 30...you know 1 1/2 resource room teachers...so, when we think in context of meeting with these people and then on top of that your support staff and your special education team that comes out, and parents, and students, um when you break that down for time, the piece of pie is pretty small.

Trish: Okay. Now, you've talked about some of the preliminary or proactive strategies to reduce the challenges that your colleagues may have...

Kate: Mm hm.

Trish: as well as how you approach colleagues when they're actually having challenges during the process; so, before and during. Are there any other strategies that you have used in the past that you would like to comment on?

Kate: Well, we have done hand outs, we've provided exemplars, we have...what else have we done? Um, we've done little workshops. So, I think that that has a hit and miss effect. So, those are the supports, Trish.

Trish: You used a term that you have never used before: *handouts*. What were on the handouts?

Kate: What were on the handouts?

Trish: Yeah.

Kate: Just the terminology. What a SMART goal is. We've also done a little inservice of writing SMART goals, um, and that's become a little easier in Saskatoon Public, um, is expecting more outcome based evidence and writing with verbs in the report cards. I think that has assisted with the Personal Program Plan and the SMART goals.

Trish: Okay. If you had the chance to change any element of the rubric outcome sampling process, what would it be and why?

Kate: Any element?

Trish: Anything at all. Totally open-ended question.

Kate: Wow. No, I can't think of anything.

Trish: So, speaking of the rubric do you feel it is an effective process?

Kate: No, truthfully I think it's a duplication of the Personal Program Plan. I don't think it assists parents anymore than the in understanding. So, I think it is more of a provincial Ministry way of collecting data, so I'm fine with that, but I don't see it as a tool for helping parents with understanding their student. I would say from a resource teacher, I feel it is another piece of paperwork.

Trish: Is there anything that you would like to add, omit, or reiterate from any of our conversations?

Kate: Yup. The one thing that I would like to, um, that I think is a concern for me is that as long as we continue to have special education on a different part of the web space that is out there with the ministry; as long as we continue to have special education and curriculum meeting and discussing, it's going to affect how the Personal Program is viewed and seen by general education teachers and how ownership is taken for that; as long as the University continues to just have one class that focuses on exceptionalities and I know that there are competing priorities, but I think integration of diversity and how you support diversity in the classroom has to be an element in the classes that university students are taking, um, then we are going to work in a silo and I think that is how special ed. works....in a silo. I think it's come a long way, but I think we have a long, long ways to go when we talk about regular and special education.

Trish: Okay. So, you feel that there is some sort of segregation?

Kate: Yup.

Trish: How do we solve it?

Kate: Well, I think the first step would be the Ministry not having the special education information with the new curriculum coming out and not on a separate page for people to access. That would be the first thing we do and then when we start to discuss *Universal Design* with the new curriculum, um, maybe updating the adaptive dimension to support, but having that front and central so that you have it every time you open up the curriculum, um, you have the information about the adaptive dimension, universal design which is in the new curriculum which I don't think teachers actually know what that means...and, um, Personal Program Plans...instead of having to go the Ministry of ...oh, what is it now?...Ministry of Children's Services because a general education teacher's not going to look there to find that. So, I really wanted to emphasize that.

Trish: Okay. How about the university, itself? Often, you have touched upon the university's approach on this. Where do you see it needing changes?

Kate: Well, you now I can only speak very vaguely from staff, mostly or colleagues who have attended, but I just think that just one class in exceptionalities probably isn't doing service to a new teacher who will be coming out to a classroom and how do I support those teachers. So, I'm looking at my classes right now: two students identified, ESL/EAL, and a range of different students with different learning abilities with, you know, different needs, and then we have a number of gifted students in our school as well. How is this teacher going to support those exceptionalities? Yeah, I don't know. I would just like the university to consider that and I'm not sure if they are working on it.

Trish: When you say *university* are you speaking of the U of S?

Kate: Yeah, mostly because I think most of our graduates come from there, so yes. Probably would be the U of R as well, but yeah. I would like to also add and I know that your professors will read this, but I think I heard out in the field too, that it is just a shame that the special education department...it's probably due to funding, but the department has diminished in size...and I just see people...that that also has a serious impact in our province and so, I guess other organizations need to lobby the government to address these concerns. I think the Ministry has also done a good job with its expectations of having greater numbers of SLPs and resource teachers being in schools, you know...I just don't know where we are going to get those qualified people.

Trish: Alright. Well, thank you. Okay, do I have your permission to push *stop*?

Kate: Yup.

## APPENDIX P

**1. Researcher:** Tricia M. Demmans

**Supervisor:** Brian Noonan, Educational Psychology and Special Education

**1 a. Name of Student:** Tricia M. Demmans

**1 b. Anticipated Start Date:** April, 2009

**Expected Completion Date:** August, 2009

**2. Title of Study:** A Proposal for the Study on the Relation between Saskatchewan Ministry of Education Requirements and School Team Collaboration

**3. Abstract:** This research is a qualitative analysis of Saskatchewan resource room teachers' experience of the inclusion of SMART Goals and Outcome Sampling Rubrics, which have been part of Saskatchewan Learning (a.k.a. Saskatchewan Ministry of Education) publications since 2006. The study uses a single case embedded case study design with three subunits. Each subunit will consist of one elementary school resource room teacher. The purpose of this study is to understand the overall perceptions that resource room teachers have of the required SMART goal and rubric outcome sampling in respect to their effect on the collaborative effort of Personal Program Planning (PPP) development. Each participant is to select one student who has met the requirements of intensive supports and has had previous PPP documents written for him or her by that particular resource room teacher, for each subunit. Exactly three SMART goals and their corresponding rubrics will be developed for each student by his or her Personal Program Planning Team.

**4. Funding:** The research will be internally funded by the researcher.

**5. Expertise:** The researcher has 10 years of experience teaching elementary school children. This teaching experience includes teaching grades 3,4 and 5 as a regular classroom teacher, as

well as teaching preschool and a high school fine arts program. During the past 4 ½ years the researcher has taught as a resource room teacher in an elementary school.

**6. Conflict of Interest:** The researcher will be recruiting the study's participants from the Saskatoon Public School Division; the researcher's employer for the past 5 years. A conflict of interest may occur due to the researcher's social networking within the Saskatoon Public School Division.

**7. Recruitment of Participants:** The first task of the case study will be to gain entry. Gaining entry involves deciding upon appropriate sites, making an initial contact, determining the best form of communication, deciding how to phrase requests and answer any questions or concerns. To ease the difficult task of gaining entry I will be trying several strategies: (1) use social networks to gain access, (2) make sure that my participants speak English as a first language, and (3) be sure to receive written permission from parents and guardians for any research that will pay special attention to individual children, such as the use of or reference to a PPP document.

The appropriate site for this case study is the Saskatoon Public School Division to ensure optimal learning for the researcher. Initial contact for this particular case study will include completing the Application Form for Permission to Conduct Research in Saskatoon Public Schools. The required attachments for the form are copies of consent forms including the parent permission letters, copies of all tests, questionnaires or interview questions that will be given to the subjects, and a signed letter or certificate of approval from the appropriate ethics review committee and information on package provided to the ethics committee. In this particular situation the parent permission letter that will need to be included with the completed form will be a Release of Information form to be completed by the parent or guardian(s) of each student, whose PPP will be a focus of the case study. The interview questions and a general outline for

the anecdotal records that will be given to the participating resource room teachers are included as attachments to this document. The completed form and its attached documents will be submitted to Dr. Scott Tunnison, Coordinator of Research for the Saskatoon Public School Division.

Social networking strategies that will be utilized to gain access include:

- Attending the meetings held for specialized program teachers of the Saskatoon Public School Division
- An e-mail sent to all of the resource room teachers of Saskatoon Public School Division inviting interested individuals to participate in the case study

These strategies will assist the researcher with recruiting subjects for the case study.

Recruitment of participants will involve purposeful sampling. Recruitment will occur during the month of April, 2009.

**8. Consent:** Please see attached forms.

**9. Method and Procedures:** Each participant will be interviewed on three occasions. The first interview will occur approximately one week prior to the PPP meeting of the designated student, in late April or early May 2009. The researcher will conduct a focused interview that will last no longer than one hour with each participant individually so that the researcher may develop concrete understanding of the content of the PPP; the teacher's perception of what collaboration is, how it can best be implemented and what resources are required for a collaborative process to be effective; and the current opinion of the resource room teacher that she or he has about the effectiveness of the PPP process thus far in the year. Questions will focus on the resource room teachers' perceptions of to what degree his or her team members can participate in the development, writing, and monitoring of the PPP.

The second interview will occur approximately 24 hours after the PPP meeting of the designated student. The second interview will focus on the individual basis and will take place after the concluding PPP has been completed in the month of May, 2009. The focused interview will be of a similar length in time to the first interview. The main purpose of the second interview will be to develop an understanding of the resource room teachers' present perception of the PPP process; if the team has had any difficulties with understanding how to use the SMART goals and rubric in an efficient manner; and if any changes were required to add clarity to the process, what measures were taken and to what degree.

The third interview will occur approximately one week after the June 2009 Review PPP document has been completed. The purpose of the third interview is to develop an understanding of the resource room teachers' present perceptions of the PPP process; any challenges the team faced during the evaluation of the PPP program; and the perceptions of the resource room teacher on how the team members reacted to the process of using the rubrics.

The interviewing will also include the four major types of questions: (1) hypothetical, (2) devil's advocate, (3) ideal position, and (4) interpretive questioning. Hypothetical questions encourage respondents to make speculations. The devil's advocate question enables the researcher to pose questions of a controversial nature by depersonalizing the issue (Merriam, 1988). Ideal position questions encourage interviewees to respond with both information and opinion. Interpretive questions provide researchers the opportunity to confirm their own understanding of what they are learning from the interviewee (Merriam, 1988).

Interviews will be recorded by tape recorder and then transcribed. In order to record the interviews the researcher will need to receive written permission by the interviewee. A conversation will also occur between each interviewee and the researcher to discuss such matters

as logistics of time, location, number of interviews to be scheduled, the use of pseudonyms to ensure privacy and a discussion of who will have first say over the study's content and how no respondent will be paid, but will be offered first access to the published thesis (Merriam, 1988).

Data collection for this study will end once the saturation point has been reached. Once the point of redundancy has occurred it is time to begin the analysis portion of the case study. Considering the PPP cycle in this province the logical time to end data collection will be at the end of the June PPP process. Stake (1995) states "Analysis essentially means taking something apart." (p.43) Data analysis involves examining, categorizing and evaluating evidence to address the study's propositions (Yin, 1994). The strategy provides an opportunity to decide what should be analyzed and why.

The principles that guided the researcher to choose a data analysis strategy were:

- (1) An analysis should rely on all the relevant evidence and include the development of rival hypotheses.
- (2) It should include all major rival interpretations.
- (3) The most significant aspect of the study should be addressed.
- (4) Similar issues and current thinking should have been taken into account during the analysis (Yin, 1994).

The researcher will be using the most preferred strategy for analysis of case which is to follow the theoretical proposition that guided the case study. In theory, the propositions should have shaped the data collection plan giving priorities to the relevant analytic strategies (Yin, 1994).

The two analytic techniques which will also be incorporated in the before mentioned strategies are: pattern-matching, exploration building. Pattern-matching compares an empirically

based pattern with a predicted one in order to detect coinciding patterns. If the patterns do coincide than the internal validity of the case study has been strengthened. Explanation-building is a type of complex pattern-matching. The goal of such a technique is to analyze the case study data by building an explanation about the case (Yin, 1994).

**10. Storage of Data:** Data from this study (e.g., audiocassette tapes, transcribed records, anecdotal records, personal journals) will be stored by Dr. Brian Noonan for at least seven years, after which they will be destroyed.

**11. Dissemination of Results:** The collected data is intended to be used to report to the Saskatoon Public School Division and the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education on the resource teachers' view of how the recent changes of the Special Education Funding Grant have affected the collaborative efforts of the PPP team. It is the hope of the researcher that the proposed study will provide some insight for special education teachers, parents and administration. There is a possibility of publication in journals.

**12. Risk, Benefits, and Deception:** There are no known risks involved with participating in the study either for teachers or students. Potential benefits for participants include helping clarify the PPP process for Saskatchewan teachers. Potential benefits for students whose PPPs will be discussed include improvement of their resource room teachers' abilities to complete the PPP.

**13. Confidentiality:** All identifying information about students, PPP team members, and schools will be kept confidential and will be replaced with pseudonyms.

**14. Data Transcript/Release:** Participants will be given the option to review their transcripts or the quotations that will appear in the presentations of the material; the decision to review or to decline to review transcripts will be recorded in writing after their interview.

**15. Debriefing and Feedback:** The researcher's informed consent form will include her contact information as well as anticipated completion date. After the final interview, participants will be told to contact the researcher after the study's completion if they are interested in the findings.

**16. Signatures:**

Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_ Tricia M. Demmans

Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_ Brian Noonan

Department Head: \_\_\_\_\_ David Mykota

**17. Required Contact Information:**

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